

# Internal Coaching:

Critical reflections on success and failure in workplace coaching.

Sue Smith

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## Abstract

### Internal Coaching:

#### **Critical reflections on success and failure in workplace coaching.**

This research study focused on the coaching practices of five internal Regional Learning and Development Managers in a multimedia organisation from 2009 to 2011. Twelve written narratives were initially used to gather information from both coaches and clients about their perceptions and experiences during a coaching session. Survey questionnaires were sent to all 135 managers who had completed the Coaching Programme since its inception in 2009, to supplement the information established from the narrative stage.

Three problems were identified: employed Learning and Development Managers were expected to deliver a coaching programme in the workplace for which they were ill-equipped, unqualified and inexperienced; there was a lack of tangible benchmarks to demonstrate the success of the clients' development; and an inconsistent standard of coaching was delivered potentially compromising ethical coaching practices and behaviour.

Coaching is a specialised field of people development, which can have a noticeable impact on both employee performance and on achieving business aims. 'Internal coaching' has evolved from a necessity to develop people within the workplace using internal resources and a limited budget. The study reflects on an example of internal coaching and discusses the successes and failures of such a practice.

According to the narratives and survey it is the coach who is the key to the success of coaching and a successful coach must be *trustworthy* with confidential matters; *objective* and able to understand the culture and operations of the company; have business *credibility*; is independent of the person being coached and, therefore, is *not* their line manager. A customised blend of appropriate styles including mentoring, instruction and coaching is recommended to achieve the best results in coaching.

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## Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are provided in the indicated locations throughout the thesis.

Terminology	Definition or Description	Page
Style	Style is the manner or behaviour that a coach adopts; for example, a coach might behave like a mentor (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010: 5).	25
Coaching	Coaching could be seen as a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders (Cox <i>et al.</i> , 2010: 1).	28
Mentoring	Mentoring is .... the transfer of knowledge/experience from a more experienced colleague to another.	32
Instruction	Instruction is described as a prescriptive or directive approach; telling the employee what and how to do something.	34
Counselling	Counselling and psychotherapy are ways of responding to a wide range of human needs. These include distress associated with what are sometimes called “problems in living”, and deeply felt need to make changes in one’s life (COSCA, 2014: Counselling and Psychotherapy).	35
Business Outcomes	Business outcomes were recognised as either quantitative (sales, profit, wastage, turnover) or qualitative business measures or observations in behaviours that contributed towards a change in performance.	154

## Introduction

Coaching has evolved over the centuries and is now applied in many fields, including business, sport and personal lives (Blakey and Day, 2012; Starr, 2011). The versatility of this intervention can lead to the confusion over its outline and although there is no agreed definition of coaching in business, there is, arguably a common understanding (Passmore, 2010). The apparent lack of defining parameters (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009) leaves coaching open to abuse or exploitation by practitioners although credibility and understanding of coaching has grown since 2000 with the increase of evidence-based approaches and models used by practitioners (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009). As professional bodies emerge to guide and protect practitioner members, coaches become increasingly aware of the wide-ranging practises in standards that threaten reputations in the marketplace (International Coach Federation, 2012).

### **What is 'Coaching'?**

Coaching has had many guises as it has evolved from a transportation mechanism (i.e. a coach is a vehicle to carry people long distances or for touring), through sport and business applications. Although there is no single accepted definition (Fischer and Beimers, 2009) used to describe the practice of coaching in business, Passmore (2010) contends that there exists a common understanding of what it actually means:

At the heart of coaching lies the idea of empowering people by facilitating self-directed learning, personal growth and improved performance (Passmore, 2010: 10).

Brock (2010) emphasises that coaching still defies all attempts to define and contain it, which may suggest why the term is still frequently misused and misunderstood by non-specialists. It may be true that many non-specialists may not be able to define or articulate with some degree of agreement what coaching is; arguably many practicing coaches could barely define it succinctly and very few could agree entirely. More important is that those commissioning and

receiving coaching and those delivering coaching agree on the expectations and what is being achieved.

In both sport and business the term coaching is often used to describe a wide repertoire of activities (Passmore, 2010). In business the phrase 'coaching' is often used synonymously with other skill development terminology such as mentoring, training and one-to-one instruction, which may contribute to the confusion over its meaning and application. Du Toit (2007) describes coaching as 'an enigma' (282). This is why agreeing expectations and agreement on what the coaching is aiming to achieve is critical. Megginson and Clutterbuck also advise focusing on expectations rather than getting distracted by definition:

It is not our task to be pedantic about this – what matters is clarity between the two partners in a developmental relationship about what is expected of them (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2005: 4).

Traditionally, 'performance coaching' has been used as a corrective or remedial tool available to bring people back on track and usually reserved for the most senior managers (Kalman, 2014; Reissner and Du Toit, 2011; Du Toit, 2007; Evered and Selman, 1989). By the 2000s Executive Coaching also included 'development' strategies used for grooming selected managers aspiring to be future leaders in the business (Kamp-Kokesch and Anderson, 2001). Today coaching is available to any level of management, and in some organisations, to non-managers.

Whether it is used to address remedial or developmental issues, many people feel that coaching has become a successful and positive technique customised for the individual to ensure that one size does not fit all. It is important that it is applied only when the circumstances are appropriate and conditions are suitable.

As coaching continues to evolve it seems it has few parameters; almost any activity can be accepted by one community or another as falling under the banner of 'coaching'. Whilst this is positive as far as increasing the awareness and success reported of coaching the negative effect is two-fold, adding to the



confusion surrounding the discipline but also diluting the quality and reputation of the practice.

Since 2000, more evidence-based research was published and universities started to offer academic programmes leading to formal qualifications. This increased the credibility, respectability and recognised body of literature of coaching which was beginning to establish as a growing profession (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009).

Many academic programmes provide understanding and clarity around coaching compared with other helping disciplines such as counselling and mentoring, sometimes providing more insight into the psychological aspects of coaching (Centre for Coaching, 2013; University of Derby, 2012). Academic programmes also provide an element of assessment to ensure coaching reaches a specific standard, although this does not always include a practical assessment of coaching practice but understanding of application through coursework; for example, the Masters of Science Coaching and Development (University of Portsmouth, 2013). For those who do not have the resources to access academic programmes there is little to monitor the standards of their coaching, apart from customer satisfaction and this is often results rather than process oriented.

Currently a coach may focus or specialise in a multitude of areas ranging from retirement coaching, business start-up coaching, team coaching through to more personal interest of career transitional coaching, life coaching, spiritual coaching, and health and wellness coaching (Association for Coaching, 2013). The approaches used throughout the practice of coaching are equally diverse and dependant on the specific development and background of the coach. Coaches with a psychology background may specialise in one or more of the twenty eight psychological approaches listed in Palmer and Whybrow's (2008) guide for practitioners. Those with little formal psychology training may develop a more hybrid approach to coaching neither uniform nor rigidly applied, less grounded in the application and principles of psychology. Modern practices of coaching are customised to the coach, the person being coached, the context and the specific conditions (Brock, 2010).

As the coaching industry grows more widespread, it attracts practitioners from neighbouring disciplines who believe that their methods and approaches are highly relevant (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009). Some coaches come from psychology-trained backgrounds. They bring knowledge and experience of standards of conduct and ethics, and tools such as psychometric assessments which add another aspect of understanding for an individual. Other coaches come from neighbouring disciplines such as counselling and psychotherapists and want to convert their knowledge and experience of therapeutic skills and develop appropriate coaching skills (University of Portsmouth, 2013). These diverse experiences and competencies will bring a rich holistic approach to coaching.

Bringing people from such diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines also brings challenges. Those trained to a particular level are expected to practice to specific guidelines, in-line with the code of conduct of the professional body which supports their development and accreditation. People from neighbouring disciplines (such as counselling, mentoring or psychotherapy) can cause confusion over the perception of coaching and what it is:

...the widening of the debate has also had a somewhat negative and confusing impact. It is our opinion that too many people from different disciplines are now trying to over-complicate the world of coaching.... Differences between the brands sometimes relate to a specific context but more often to some theoretical or academic influence that is of little relevance to the process (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 8).

Those who have spent resources attaining particular levels of competence and specialist knowledge can also become protective (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009) when generalists start practicing without seemingly appropriate levels of competence. Poor coaching can be detrimental, both to the recipient and to the reputation of the industry. The coaching profession is currently unregulated so it relies on the voluntary means of conscientious coaches to continually develop their competence. Some knowledge of psychology and awareness of the potential detriment that poor practice can have would be advantageous in preventing harm

to recipients but even high levels of knowledge may not prevent poor levels of practice. The lack of regulation also allows for the possibility of a risk of deception and manipulation from unprincipled coaches eager to win business (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011).

Consequently the coaching market place is full of approaches, models and practices from coaches who are keen to represent best practice but often leading to a consumer with more choice than knowledge. The growing number of coaching fields (for example: retirement, life, spiritual, organisational, relational), the number of coaches available, the disciplines of coaching (psychology or non-psychology) and the different associations, accreditations and professional bodies supporting coaching compound the confusion many have around coaching.

### **Approaches, Models and Theories**

A number of approaches and models have evolved in coaching to provide an implicit structure and clarity for coaches (Alexander in Passmore, 2010). Such models and approaches can be used to explore feelings, thoughts and memories to approach new challenges with a greater sense of purpose and clarity (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2010). The most popular coaching model used by coaches in the UK is the GROW model, or one with at least some association or derivation of it (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). Despite the GROW model being a behavioural-based coaching model, used to develop competencies and remove blocks to achieve sustainable changes in business practice, few coaches recognise the behavioural based roots in the work of Pavlov, Watson and Skinner (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008).

Both John Whitmore and Graham Alexander have been instrumental in the construction, development and popularisation of the GROW model (Cox *et al.*, 2010; Passmore, 2010; O'Connor and Lages, 2007), which has become 'the most well-known framework developed for coaching' (Passmore, 2010: 14). Its development and application over the last 20 years has seen the GROW model become 'the industry standard' (Alexander in Passmore, 2010: 83), although Cox

(2006) and Goodman (2002) have evolved further models from GROW which focus more specifically on adult learning and development (Cox *et al.*, 2010).

GROW is the mnemonic acronym used to provide a flexible structure or framework for a conversation, project or plan (Passmore, 2010). The framework is formed of four stages, focusing on the goal that is set, the reality of the situation in which one is operating, the options available or recognised to proceed and the option that will be committed to or pursued in order to achieve the goal. Parsloe and Leedham (2009) describe this as,

establish the **G**oal;  
examine the **R**eality;  
consider all **O**ptions;  
confirm the **W**ill to act. (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 163)

The GROW framework provides a simple structure on which to develop a conversation but does not have any theoretical grounding nor evidence-based theoretical research to support its development. It is commonly used in business by generalist practitioners; possibly due to its apparent simplicity for those with little psychology-related training. Arguably the GROW model is over-simplistic and some coaches prefer a more 'scientific' evidenced approach, grounded in psychology or evidence-based research (Passmore, 2010), but it is in a memorable format that can be applied to coaching interactions (Alexander in Passmore, 2010).

As coaching developed quickly, Co-Active Coaching was presented in the United States of America by Whitworth, Kimsey-House and Sandahl in 1998. This model complements the GROW model and was influential as it focused on the perspective of the person receiving the coaching, rather than that of the coach's viewpoint (O'Connor and Lages, 2007). Here, the emphasis shifts from being a powerful coach to creating a powerful relationship:

GROW describes the process and structure of what is happening, whereas coactive coaching focuses on the inside. It deals with the attitudes and skills the coach needs to apply the GROW model or any other coaching model (O'Connor and Lages, 2007: 71).

Psychologists Palmer and Whybrow (2008) list over 28 approaches compared to the 13 outlined by academics Cox *et al.* (2010), 7 described by practitioners O'Connor and Lages (2007) and 7 by chartered psychologist Passmore (2010). The only approaches appearing in all 4 publications were GROW and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), which are possibly the most commonly practiced approaches across coaching practices. NLP does not have 'an explicitly articulated theoretical foundation' (Cox *et al.*, 2010: 187) and is acknowledged as a practical rather than theoretical discipline. Many of the other approaches have their roots grounded in psychological theory and this may be why they are less abundantly practiced by learning and development practitioners who coach within organisations, compared to approaches practiced by coaches who are trained in a particular approach.

Some descriptions of recognised approaches used in coaching:

- Behavioural coaching focuses on external behaviour, rather than goals, values and motivation.
- Solution-Focused approach is based around defining the desired solution and potential pathways to get there, rather than the cause and effect process of how the issue arose.
- NLP coaching centres on anchoring or classical conditioning and what goes on inside the brain, much like cognitive psychology.
- Ontological coaching focuses on the way of being, the nature and quality of being. It begins from principles, rather than behaviour.

Due to the growth of coaching over recent years and the growing amount of evidence-based research, the diversity and choice of approaches to coaching are rapidly increasing, although the evidence base is still limited (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). There are, as Palmer and Whybrow (2008) acknowledge a large number of coaching books on the market which do not include academic references or models derived from evidence-based research. As the volume of research increases, choice over models and approach is growing but this can add to the confusion and complexity for both coach and client.

There are a number of complex and diverse theoretical perspectives that underpin coaching. A certain model or approach may draw on a number of psychological theories, for example cognitive theory or psychodynamic theory (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). The GROW model, 'based on Gallwey's 'Inner Game', seeks to increase awareness and responsibility for action' (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008: 254) and when approached as a goal attainment form of coaching, may also be underpinned by psychodynamic theory. Psychodynamic theory was initially used to address individuals' workplace issues, and focuses on the role of the unconscious processes in human behaviour' (Cox, *et al.*, 2010: 1) aimed at understanding organisational behaviour and providing them with a 'space to think'.

Having 'space to think' to build awareness and self-belief are core qualities of a coach, according to Parsloe and Leedham (2009). Reflection is a mental process which promotes learning through developing learner's self-awareness and focused attention. Dewey (1933) is credited with first recognising reflective learning although he saw reflection more as a precursor to action and future-facing, rather than dwelling on the past. Kolb (1975) is the name most prominently associated with reflective learning and turned Dewey's ideas about experiential learning into a structured learning cycle. However, it was Schön (1983) who distinguished between 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'; the former reveals the kind of knowledge we use to carry out tasks and approach problems, the latter happens after the event.

Cognitive Behavioural Theory has developed since the 1990s and is based on the premise that the way you think about events affects how you feel about them and this in turn impacts on your performance (Cox, *et al.*, 2010). In this theory, coaches may explore the existence and influence of the inner dialogue or critical inner voice that may have an impact on self-esteem and confidence.

It is, however, feasible, that a coach may discuss these ideas and notions with a client without recognising them as specific theories but still used to underpin the coach's approach. This raises a further question as to whether the coach can be

doing potential harm if they are 'dabbling' in psyche with little awareness of their actions.

## **Coaching Psychology**

Coaching psychology is a term used to describe coaching from coaches with a psychology-trained background:

...the main audience is psychologists who are either already providing services as coaching psychologists or who are considering doing so (Coaching Psychologist, 2006: What is Coaching Psychologist).

Although many of the tools and techniques applied by practicing coaching psychologists have often been drawn from clinical, counselling and organisational/occupational psychology, coaching psychology is fundamentally about supporting clients to create their own success at work and in life. Coaching psychology began to appear in earnest from about 2000 after developments from psychologists in behavioural change, adult development and mentoring in the previous two decades expanded into coaching (Brock, 2010). Pressure subsequently increased to bring coherence into an emerging profession as coaching became more widespread.

The coaching psychology profession have strict ethical principles which are a fundamental part of psychology training but as a result psychologists can become quite cautious and understandably protective when the standards of practice they represent risk being lowered by coaches who do not recognise the importance or respect the ethical principles. Whilst it may be true that psychology-trained coaches offer high standards of ethical practice as a result of the training they have undertaken, ensuring they have sufficient business knowledge and experience to understand the culture and complexities of organisational life to be an effective coach is also a criteria to be considered.

## **Terminology**

To avoid confusion, the term 'Client' in this thesis refers to anyone receiving coaching. The Association for Coaching also uses this term to describe anyone receiving coaching or coaching supervision from a coach (Association for Coaching, 2013). The word 'Sponsor' will describe the person who has encouraged the client to participate in the coaching; this might be their line manager or a mentor within the organisation.

## **The International and UK Coaching Industry**

The Coaching industry is growing at a remarkable rate (International Coach Federation, 2012). Recent reports show that membership of coaching bodies continues to rise; and this does not take into account those practising coaching who remain unsubscribed to professional associations. In the UK, professional bodies representing professional coaches and practitioners also report an increase in the practice. Many professional bodies don't define what they regard as a 'professional coach' or whether any particular skills, training or accreditation is required but the UK Chapter of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council describe it as someone for whom coaching forms a significant part of their role (EMCC UK, 2013). The Institute of Engineering Designers (IED) believe that being 'professional' also means demonstrating competence in the standards outlined in the competences and accepting personal responsibility for their work; something that may be aspirational for some professional coaches.

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was commissioned by the International Coach Federation (ICF) which reported that 'the ICF membership numbers grew from around 11,000 in 2006 to almost 19,000 by the end of 2011' (ICF, 2012: Introduction). Responses for this study were received from coaches in 117 countries, from over 7,700 ICF members and 4,400 non-ICF members (ICF, 2012). Collaboration was recognised from a number of organisations who made the survey accessible to coaches. Organisations included the Association for Coaching (AfC) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), as well as other associations who developed and represented coaches.



From the data, PwC estimated that there are approximately 47,500 professional coaches worldwide, 87% of whom were active at the time of their response. This represented 41,300 active coaches worldwide. PwC concluded that there are globally 6.9 coaches per 1 million of population (ICF, 2012) equating to 3,500 coaches in Eastern Europe generating approximately \$69million; the equivalent of \$19,714 annual income. A key concern that was concluded from the study was tackling untrained individuals who call themselves coaches. The study did not present a data results comparison between trained and untrained 'coaches'; it only identified those active coaches who had received training compared to those active coaches who had not.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) (2007) learning and development survey, coaching was used in 63% of United Kingdom organisations and has become a valuable and widely used tool, although it was not articulated who provided the coaching and whether it came from internal resource or external expertise. Altman (2007) suggests that in 1997 executive coaching was almost unknown in the UK. In his anecdotal article he reports that recent research (not referenced) indicates that about 50% of UK companies spend £100,000-£500,000 a year on coaching compared to the American companies who spend nearer \$1 billion a year (Altman, 2007).

The CIPD reported that coaching takes place in 86% of organisations from all different sectors within the United Kingdom, including small and medium sized enterprises (SME) organisations (CIPD, 2011). However, comparing the cost of coaching against the activity of coaching gives a false impression as more and more coaching is applied in organisations by internal HR Professionals and may not be specifically identified in training and development budgets. St John-Brooks (2014) reports a similar figure to that stated in CIPD's (2011) report, that 'around 80% of organisations use internal coaching in some form and this is expected to increase again' (St John-Brooks, 2014: xv).

The reported amount of money spent on coaching within organisations can be misleading. Although the practice of coaching is increasing (ICF, 2012), many of the costs associated with coaching have changed. Ten years ago, coaching

services were procured from coaches external to the organisation but today coaching is frequently provided by resources employed from within the organisation (CIPD, 2011). Internal coaching can be provided by a dedicated coach employed by the organisation but sometimes it is provided by a HR generalist who integrates this activity into the daily routine of training and developing.

### **Internal Coaching**

'Internal coaching' is a more recent form of coaching that has attracted some criticism from qualified or specialist coaches, some challenges for the internal coach, and some benefits for the managers and people being coached within the organisation (St John-Brooks, 2014). This form of coaching has evolved from the necessity to provide coaching to employees in the workplace but without the justification and expense of bringing in external coaches when training and development budgets are under scrutiny. Internal coaches are often part of the HR department and arguably lack the experience or qualification that specialist coaches have (Frisch, 2005). This raises many challenges for the internal coach, including confidentiality, ethical issues, and confidence in themselves and confidence from the organisation (St John-Brooks, 2014; Rock and Donde, 2008).

Due to their positions within the organisation an internal coach may apply coaching from a repertoire of techniques available in their skill-set and are therefore not necessarily a specialist coach, rather a generalist learning and development professional. Frisch (2005) explains that the 'internal coach' has evolved from the curiosity of HR Professionals to learn about the inner workings of coaching and set appropriate expectations and standards when applied within an organisation. This may be true but internal coaching has also been drawn from the need to develop employees effectively and resourcefully when costs were under scrutiny (St John-Brooks, 2014). As coaching grows in popularity and subsequent demand, Frisch acknowledges the benefits of applying internal coaching to provide development 'more widely and less expensively' than sourcing it from external expertise (Frisch, 2005: 23).

Internal coaching is alive and very active according to Frisch (2005), despite not being recognised or well-accepted. Frisch (2005) describes internal coaching as 'flying under the radar of mainstream coaching' (23) and suggests that there is little in the way of professional meetings, forums or even content within training curricula to meet the needs or provide advice on standards, best practice and a common philosophy and approach of coaching undertaken by internal HR Professionals who have begun dedicating positions to coach and manage coaching within an organisation. Both St John-Brooks (2014) and Frisch (2005) believe that internal coaching has different key challenges to those that external coaches face and suggest clarification over the coaching strategy and purpose from the outset. Both identify confidentiality as a key concern for internal coaches.

In recognition of the growing popularity of internal coaching the EMCC UK set up an internal coaching special interest group (SIG) in 2011 and in February 2013 devoted a specific area of its website to internal coaching (St John-Brooks, 2014). As well as acknowledging the growing concept of internal coaching, this recognition also serves to promote EMCC to a wider audience than specialist coaches:

This is a potentially rich area of the coaching and mentoring industry to explore, perhaps even more so because it is so strongly driven by organisational context and culture (EMCC, 2013: Research and Development).

As evidence-based research specifically relating to internal coaching starts to emerge, this platform is a relevant place to promote understanding and common standards and conduct:

The Internal Coaching SIG is focused on research and development of EMCC UK strategy around people who coach and mentor inside their employer organisation (EMCC, 2013: About Us).

Arguably one might also seek to promote such research to those less aware of the conduct expectations of internal coaches. Promoting research to members of a professional body suggests the research is shared with those already committed to particular standards. The challenge is to promote the research to internal coaches who are not members of coach-specific professional bodies, not

members of any professional body and are less familiar with codes of conduct and ethical behaviour.

Almost a quarter of the EMCC UK's 'individual' membership is conducting coaching and mentoring within their organisations (EMCC, 2013). The EMCC is not alone in recognising the growing popularity of internal coaching. In June 2009, the ICF created a 'professional group' discussion forum on LinkedIn, titled Internal Coaching Community of Practice, which now has 1,618 members. The purpose of the group is to provide 'A Community of Practice for ICF members who are internal coaches, employed by the company whom they coach for, as a regular employee' (LinkedIn, 2013: ICF Internal Coaching Group). This forum provides a network opportunity for practitioners to discuss issues and challenges and air concerns and anecdotes about relevant topics, acting as a sounding board for those interested in internal coaching. It provides a practical platform to raise awareness and to network, rather than a platform designated to sharing research findings.

Internal coaching provides a way for organisations to utilise the development of coaching without the additional costs of securing external coaches. Internal employees such as learning and development professionals or dedicated coaches can undertake the coaching, although one might argue that their skill-set is not as polished as that of an external coach who has received dedicated training to be a coach. This form of coaching has been born out of the necessity to find development opportunities for employees without the justification of additional cost. It can be successfully and positively practiced but monitoring the standards of internal coaching could be prudent to ensure a good standard of practice and continuous professional development. Internal coaching is not without its challenges but does offer a practical alternative to external coaching.

Internal coaching is an effective and resourceful way of customising employee development that fits into a convenient length of time in a climate of constant change and demand. Many coaches refer to the perceived value that clients describe as a sounding board (The Ridler Report, 2013; Gray, Ekinci and Goregaokar, 2011; Marshall, 2011; Grant, Green and Rynsaardt, 2010; Browne

*et al.*, 2008) to alleviate stress and be able to discuss operational solutions without the consequences that discussing potential solutions with their line manager might have. Coaching has also been described as having therapeutic value (Bozer and Sarros, 2012, CIPD, 2012; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Smither, 2011) and help engage clients in retrospective sensemaking (Du Toit, 2014) and through sharing concerns (Browne *et al.*, 2008), so are internal coaches perceived as therapists or development specialists?

### **Background to the Organisation studied**

The organisation studied was the regionalised subsidiary of a large multi-media organisation, which had UK and international media interests spanning national and regional newspapers, news and classified websites, television, radio, exhibitions and information publishing. It operated in three regions in the UK; the Midlands and North, the South West and Wales, and the South East.

At the time of the research (2009-11), the organisation had a portfolio of 115 newspapers, comprising dailies, weeklies, frees, with famous and established brands which were specific and recognisable in each of the regions and often further afield. The organisation boasted 5.8 million readers of these regional papers in the United Kingdom; and also had a strong digital side to the business, including leading digital classified partner brands, for example; [jobsite.co.uk](http://jobsite.co.uk); [findaproperty.com](http://findaproperty.com); [motors.co.uk](http://motors.co.uk).

The organisation was divided into three main regions: the North and Midlands; London and South East; and South West and Wales, as outlined above. Two learning and development professionals were located in the North and Midlands region and two in the South West and Wales region. One learning and development professional was located in the London and South East region.

In 2009, a programme of coaching was introduced into the North by the Midlands' learning and development professional who was covering maternity leave for the North's learning and development professional. The programme's aim was to provide additional development for managers and aspiring managers. It was recognised by line managers that many senior staff had attended the

management training courses provided internally by the company but few applied their learning consistently across the business. The Programme was subsequently introduced across the Midlands to cover the whole region and within months its rollout across the other regions was being discussed amongst the learning and development team.

The initial *Coaching Programme* was conceived and delivered by a learning and development professional who was an experienced, trained and qualified coach and was employed by the business. She was also the researcher in this study. The programme was developed as a solution to a genuine business problem presented by a department director. The programme was extended across the initial region and subsequently, into all three regions within one year of the initial roll out. Unlike the initial programme, the coaching in other regions was conducted by learning and development professionals who had neither training nor experience in coaching and were therefore considered inexperienced, unqualified and untrained for the coaching.

### **The *Coaching Programme***

The *Coaching Programme* was initially designed to develop managers who had received training through the standard company portfolio of courses and were looking for ways to encourage implementation to develop the skills and knowledge gained.

Prior to embarking on the *Coaching Programme*, a 360° instrument was available to provide feedback for the client. This provided a starting point for the coach to look at potential areas of development or improvement for the client. It also identified areas of strength for the individual; building confidence and increasing self-awareness. The feedback tool was not obligatory although the majority of clients used the instrument. Respondents to the 360° feedback instrument were identified from all levels (360 degrees around the client) of management surrounding the client and were asked to provide feedback on specific areas of interest; hence the 360 degree reference.

In this research, the feedback from the 360° feedback tool was used as a platform for development, but the clients were also encouraged to introduce their own areas of development in the sessions, if they wished to. The 360° assessment tool had been successfully used with over 100 managers who had undertaken the *Coaching Programme* within the organisation since 2009, although no specific training on presenting the feedback from 360° instruments had been given to the coaches.

At the end of the *Coaching Programme*, those receiving the assessment and subsequent coaching were asked to complete an evaluation of the process. This was then reviewed with the senior manager who had commissioned the coaching for the client; usually their line manager.

### **Training and Preparation for the Coaches**

Prior to the initiative being rolled out in each of the remaining regions, the learning and development professionals received two days of instruction around the content and process of the *Coaching Programme*. The training focused on a basic grounding of what coaching was, the role of the coach, and the structure of the programme introduced into the organisation. The GROW model (Whitmore, 2003) was presented as the model to structure coaching conversations although it was acknowledged that other models and approaches were used by external coaches, for example Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Transactional Analysis, Positive Psychology.

Although other models of coaching are available, the GROW model is a simple mnemonic acronym that coaches with little training and no background in psychology can apply. As mentioned earlier, it is regarded as the industry standard (Alexander in Passmore, 2010) and the most popular coaching model in the UK (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). During the preparation and training of the coaches it was anticipated that this model could be understood and applied by the coaches during the coaching sessions with the minimal amount of underpinning theory. How well the coaches applied the model, and how consistently, was not observed in the study. If the model is applied inappropriately

or inconsistently a client might perceive the 'coaching' as an alternative approach (such as mentoring, counselling, instruction).

This structured, process-driven interaction between the coach and client included the 360° feedback instrument or assessment, examining values and motivation, setting goals, defining action plans, and helping clients to remove blocks to achieve valuable and sustainable change in their professional lives. This process is described by Skiffington and Zeus (2003) in Palmer and Whybrow (2008) as Behavioural Coaching although this form of coaching was not explicitly discussed with the internal coaches on the Coaching Programme. When combined with the GROW model, behavioural coaching is regarded as the most popular form of coaching in the United Kingdom (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008; Edgerton and Palmer (2005) in Grant, Green and Rynsaardt, 2010).

In the GROW model, G stands for goal: the coach helps to clarify what the client is trying to achieve and what success looks like; R stands for reality: the client describes the context of the situation outlining all the resources that are available to achieve success; O is for options: the client explores all the potential suggestions and solutions before committing to one; W is the stage where the client commits to taking action: what they will do. This framework was used to structure the discussion throughout the coaching session.

The remaining time in the training session was used for practice sessions, and feedback and practical discussion points which were raised by the learning and development professionals (coaches). This training did not lead to a specific qualification and was not accredited by any coaching body. The organisation had previously discussed providing training leading to a qualification for the remaining four coaches but this was not pursued due to budget restrictions and operational commitments.

The coaching provided through the *Coaching Programme* was available to employees (clients) who primarily had management responsibility, although not necessarily responsible for managing people. A minority of people who participated in the questionnaire had no management responsibility (Non



Manager), but were seen as developing or potential managers. The coaching was generally commissioned by the client's line manager although sometimes coaches were approached directly by potential clients. The level of management experience of clients varied from non-manager, team leaders/ supervisors, managers, head of departments, regional managers, and senior managers including directors in the business. The internal coach for each region provided the coaching for the client, rather than a coach being allocated based on experience, management level, skill level, or availability.

### **Rationale for the Research**

The research undertaken as part of this thesis describes and discusses the introduction of internal coaching by learning and development professionals who were essentially untrained in coaching. Four of the learning and development professionals had not undertaken any training in coaching until they were invited to be involved in the *Coaching Programme*. At this point, the organisation arranged for them to receive two days of instruction on how to administer and arrange the coaching sessions and the 360<sup>0</sup> reports, receive some input on the fundamentals of what coaching was, and experience some practice sessions on conducting and receiving coaching. Even with this tailored information, they were still considered untrained compared to the fifth learning and development professional (Researcher-coach) who had attended a training course and received certification by a coach training-provider.

These 'internal coaches' were part of the *Coaching Programme* which was designed as a response to the need for development of internal operators within an organisation operating on restricted budgets. Internal coaching emerged due to the necessity to develop people, particularly during times of austerity. This research reflects on an example of internal coaching that potentially compromised the ethical coaching practices and behaviours within a UK organisation.

This research is based predominantly on clients' perspectives of the success and experiences of internal coaching and the value they attributed to the *Coaching*

*Programme*. Information was sought to observe how the coaches undertook their additional duties and how successful the clients perceived the coaching sessions were.

A further review of current literature was undertaken around different aspects of the *Coaching Programme*, including coaching and the difference between seemingly interchangeable terminology such as counselling and mentoring, commonly used in organisations to represent coaching. The literature review also draws on recent reports of the use of 360 degree assessment tools as a means of providing objective information on which to base the coaching development.

The study sought to identify different styles which could be applied by a coach during the intervention to see if any suggestions could be made about which style proved most effective during the coaching sessions studied. The impact on performance and business outcomes that internal coaching had in this organisation is examined and recommendations for improving future internal coaching programmes are made.

### **The Aim of the Research**

The aim of the research was to observe the application of internal coaching and identify whether coaching was perceived by participants of the *Coaching Programme* to be successful as a development intervention in achieving business outcomes. The use of predominantly untrained and inexperienced internal coaches to deliver this development intervention was also observed to see if positive results were achieved. It is often difficult to find a reliable measure that will quantify or qualify the extent of impact that behaviours can have on performance. In this study, business outcomes were recognised as either qualitative or quantitative business measures or observations in behaviours that contributed towards a change in performance.

The research addresses the following questions, using the contributions of participants describing their experiences;

1. Does the coaching style applied within the coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
2. Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of coaching?
3. Does internal coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

## Literature Review

### Introduction

Coaching has evolved and now contains 'cross fertilised practices and theories of many disciplines' (Brock, 2010: 6). The different applications of coaching emerging demonstrate its flexibility and versatility, customised to the needs and talents of each coach, client and situation. Such variations in the application of coaching include peer coaching, team coaching, business coaching and internal coaching, to name just a few. The review of literature within this chapter focuses on the broad nature of coaching within the business setting, rather than specifically on any application, such as internal coaching or peer coaching.

The literature reveals coaching to be an unregulated industry into which companies invest large amounts of resource (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011; Paradise and Horner, 2007; Vermeulen and Admiraal, 2009) with little consideration of how to measure the impact on productivity or return on investment. Another concern is employees' psychological and emotional welfare (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008; Kilburg, 2004) and the heightened risk that badly-informed senior managers in organisations seem prepared to take by exposing their impressionable and valuable resources to substandard coaching. Large sums of money and time are injected into coaching with 70% of respondents to a survey reporting that spend on coaching was maintained or increased and only 20% reporting a decrease (CIPD, 2009). Personnel departments in some organisations have dedicated posts to manage coaching within the business (Frisch, 2005), with the expectation that it will improve individual or organisational performance.

Coaching is widely acknowledged, although still mainly anecdotally, as an effective means of improving business results and increasing personal self-knowledge (CIPD, 2012, Gray, Ekinci and Goregaokar, 2011; De Haan, Bertie, Day and Sills, 2010; Perkins, 2009; Moen and Skaalvik, 2009). There are also descriptive reports from practitioners (Berglas, 2013; Newell, 2013; Nezaki, 2012; Nesbit, 2012; Marshall, 2011) that coaching provides the opportunity for recipients to feel better, be supported, remove stress through constructive

dialogue, and have an objective and neutral sounding board to clarify thoughts and bounce ideas around (The Ridler Report, 2013; CIPD, 2012; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang and Fernandes, 2008; Sperry, 2008; Browne, Kelly and Sargent, 2008). Many recipients refer to the coaching as therapy or treatment (Maxwell, 2009; Kilburg and Levinson, 2008; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Kilburg and Levinson, 2008). Although there is a growing evidence-based information on coaching, a proportion of this remains weak and descriptive (CIPD, 2012). At the time this research was undertaken there remained little empirical evidence of robust, peer reviewed research. Griffiths and Campbell (2009) particularly noted a lack of research into the process of coaching and Kilburg (2004) in Kombarakaran *et al.* (2008) observes a lack of empirical data to support the evidence that coaching produces positive outcomes.

Many of the empirical studies reported in the literature (Gray *et al.*, 2011; Grant, Green and Rynsaardt, 2010; Griffiths and Campbell, 2009; Grant, Curtayne and Burton, 2009; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Perkins, 2009; Moen and Skaalvik, 2009; Scriffignano, 2011) involve coaches from externally sourced coaching organisations that specialise in providing coaching, rather than internally sourced coaches (CIPD, 2012). In practice, coaches are sourced from innovative places, dependant on the budget and often the resources available. St John-Brooks (2014) and Thompson (2011) describe two UK-based empirical studies involving coaches sought from resources within the organisation.

### **Recent Developments in the idea of ‘Coaching’**

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) and Brock (2010) note the emergence of sporadic coaching articles and publications as early as the 1930s. The term ‘coaching’ then appeared in management literature in the 1950s as part of the line manager’s responsibility to develop subordinates through an apprenticeship approach, according to Evered and Selman (1989). The 1970s saw parallels with sports coaching as practitioners tried to translate sports coaching into managerial situations but Evered and Selman (1989) contend that there is little noteworthy literature until 1978 when renewed interest was stimulated with the publishing of Ferdinand Fournies’ 1978 book, *Coaching for Improved Work Performance*. By

1980, seventeen articles and four books on coaching by managers had been printed (Brock, 2010). Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) suggest that little of significance was published until the 1990s when writers proposed coaching as a force for organisational change.

The descriptions of what coaching is seem as varied and flexible as the definitions, which might be due to the varied application and context within which coaching has been used. It is also reflective of the complex and evolving presence that coaching has adopted. Since the 1980s coaching has appeared in literature as a training technique in the context of management development, 'born of a rapidly changing socioeconomic environment and nourished by the root disciplines of psychology, business, sports, and adult education' (Brock, 2010: 1).

By the 1990s, coaching was seen as a corrective or remedial tool, largely available to help to bring managers back on track usually timed around the annual review, and consequently coaching received a stigma attached to it in its early years as an implied job threat (Shuit, 2005; Evered and Selman, 1989). By the end of the decade, 79 coaching books had been published; 62% of these in the last two years (Brock, 2010). However, by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century coaching was seen more as a 'grooming tool' or senior management 'development tool' (Sherpa Coaching, 2013; Du Toit, 2007; Shuit, 2005). From 2000-2004, 153 books and 132 coaching articles were published in business and psychological journals, and coaching psychology was recognised as distinct special interest groups in the United Kingdom and Australia psychology organisations. Coaching was available to those who were seen by the most senior within the company as aspiring to be the future leaders in the business - hence the description executive coaching.

## **The History of Coaching**

It is claimed that the roots of coaching go as far back as Socrates (O'Connor and Lages, 2007; Brock, 2010) and some still refer to the Socratic techniques of questioning used in coaching (Passmore in Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). Brock

(2010), whose dissertation was on research into the history of coaching as part of her Ph.D., claims that few coaches understand the eclectic history of coaching.

As mentioned earlier, the origin of the word 'coach' dates back over 500 years, from the Hungarian village of Kocs (Stern, 2004), when in the 1500s to 'coach' someone meant to provide a comfortable, covered wheeled wagon or carriage (koczi) developed to carry its passengers through the harsh terrain and transfer them from one place to another (O'Connor and Lages, 2007; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2010; De Haan *et al.*, 2011):

The very first use of the word "coach" in English occurred in the 1500s to refer to a particular kind of carriage. (It still does.) Hence, the root meaning of the verb "to coach" is to convey a valued person from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be (Witherspoon and White, 1996: 15).

The word coach is still used today as a reference to transport, but probably more frequently and broadly as a development reference both in sport and business.

Coaching transferred to the business environment from the field of sports in the 1960s, evolved and expanded over the next five decades and has become one of the fastest-growing professions (Passmore, 2010). This organic and unchecked evolution, however, has also bred doubt and confusion as coaching has attracted attention from a number of disciplines and conflict over practices.

According to Parsloe and Leedham (2009) the notion of coaching within business started with the introduction of Hersey and Blanchard's 'Situational Leadership Model'. This use of 'coaching' focussed more on the manager's style and approach of managing their reports, rather than a development technique. Style is the manner or behaviour (Meggison and Clutterbuck, 2010) that a coach adopts; for example, a coach might behave like a mentor (5).

The early impact on the emergence of management coaching as a development intervention came from tennis coach Tim Gallwey's philosophy of releasing and

harnessing the self-knowledge and potential to improve performance (O'Connor and Lages, 2007; Parsloe and Leedham, 2009):

The analogy between high achievers in sport and work has fostered the belief that it is possible to develop 'great coaches' who can help produce extraordinary results (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 6).

Gallwey's approach focused on defeating the 'outer' opponent and the 'inner' opponent. The latter was much trickier to defeat 'because it knows all your weaknesses and problems', such as self-doubt, distraction and inner conversation (O'Connor and Lages, 2007: 23). Gallwey brought together humanistic psychology, sports psychology and the idea of programming the unconscious to improve performance.

Stern (2004) compares the origins of coaching with a more recent description of coaching in the business world:

Today, it is the organizational consultant who can provide the coaching to help carry the weary executive through constantly changing and harsh environment faced by business leaders of the 21st century (Stern, 2004: 161).

Stern's description of coaching may provide the perception that coaches are revitalising agents, introduced for the disenchanted and exhausted client, demotivated and disillusioned in their aspirations or career path.

Coaching in business, like many development approaches, can promote motivation by honing acquired skills and engaging the client in the resolution of issues discussed; although many people who have identified coaching as the appropriate development approach may already be motivated and excited about their aspirations but lack the clarity or know-how to address them. Coaching can be seen as a more suitable contemporary development approach; flexible, individualised and versatile to be applied effectively in an increasingly demanding fast paced environment where taking a day out for development may be quite challenging given operational commitments.



Coaching can be applied as a remedial or developmental solution. Arguably if it is applied in a context to recover a situation (remedial) it could also be classed as developmental. Development is 'a process of moving from one level of performance to a new and different level' (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 77). Since coaching relates 'primarily to performance improvement' (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010: 4) one might perceive all coaching as developmental. Performance coaching however is focused specifically on performance-related behaviours (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). Any development implies the need for 'clear standards and methods of measurement or assessment against the standards' (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 77); this should always be clarified regardless of the type of coaching. However, if performance is currently below the required standard and therefore performance coaching is applied, clarity over the performance and behaviour standards is paramount.

### **Defining Coaching**

Defining coaching across many disciplines, and many practitioners and authors has proven difficult, especially over the period of dramatic growth in the last decade (De Haan *et al.*, 2011; Brock, 2010). Coaching has also increased in perceived value (ICF, 2013; Sherpa Coaching, 2013; CIPD, 2012; Gregory, Beck and Carr, 2011) and trends suggest continued progression and interest in coaching (The Ridler Report, 2013; Sherpa Coaching, 2013). Coaches (Nesbit, 2012; Nezaki, 2012; Atkinson, 2012) and researchers (Scriffignano, 2011; Gray *et al.*, 2011; De Haan *et al.*, 2011) do describe what impact coaching has or what coaching does. Coaching continues to gain interest and consequently research and publications on the intervention increase but more is needed to understand the different aspects and impact of its process and application (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

The fact that there is no conclusive agreement on a definition of coaching provides some indication of the flexibility, individualisation and variation of its application by professionals and practitioners. It also reflects the uncertainty of what coaching actually is and is not. The lack of definitive and containment of coaching might also be due to its innovative and evolving nature or, arguably the

mindless exploitation of reckless unqualified practitioners ready to shoe-horn coaching into any square hole that coaching might fit into and naive employers are willing to pay for, regardless of the consequences imposed on recipients. Ultimately, coaching is described as a development process, which promotes independent learning (Dunlop, 2006) and the implementation of actions to gain progress or increase performance (Koonce, 1994; Neenan and Palmer, 2001; Downey, 2007). The tools and techniques used in coaching seem as varied and elusive as its definition, and continue to increase.

Cox *et al.* (2010) define coaching as:

Coaching could be seen as ... a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee and potentially for other stakeholders (Cox *et al.*, 2010: 1).

This definition seems to encapsulate many of the views from other authors; being a development or learning process as described by Dunlop (2006), involving sustainable change or to gain progress and improve performance (Koonce, 1994; Neenan and Palmer, 2001; Downey, 2007).

Cox *et al.*'s (2010) definition provides an appropriate working definition for this thesis and also confirms how varied and fluid the process of coaching has become in practice. Saying that coaching involves 'appropriate strategies, tools, techniques' recognises that a coach may use a particular model, such as the GROW model, in a coaching interaction and complement this with tools such as the 360° feedback or similar inventories.

The term coaching is often misused in businesses or used interchangeably with other development approaches, such as counselling and mentoring (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010; Du Toit, 2007), leading to confusion over its meaning and application. Dunlop (2006) referred to a commonly used one-to-one coaching definition in her introduction to the empirical research that she conducted on team coaching. Nesbit (2012) recognises that not all coaching takes place 'between a single coach and a single client' (69), describing different applications of what the

International Coach Federation defines as a 'thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their professional and personal potential' (Nesbit, 2012: 65); executive coaching, team coaching, peer coaching and group coaching. Dunlop (2006) acknowledges that coaching does focus on enhancing performance by maximising potential and applies Whitmore's definition to coaching in a team context:

Unlocking a team's (formerly individual) potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them (Whitmore, 2003 in Dunlop, 2006: 25).

Dunlop (2006) recognises the value of engagement in coaching that promotes self-sufficiency of learning rather than the dependency of being taught. Browne (2006) also recognises the value that coaching has with engagement, stating 'it is through coaching that professional learning is enhanced' (269).

Although most articles refrain from defining coaching, some do describe the impact that coaching has. Those that do attempt a definition, often provide an ambiguous metaphoric description that could arguably be applied to a number of developmental or even friendly interactions, rather than providing a clear and unquestionable outline. Terms, such as unlocking or maximising potential or performance are intangible, unclear and indefinable.

Koonce's confidence in, and passion for, coaching is obvious and he provides some indication of what his coaching entails; tailored to the individual, focusing on techniques and behaviours, one-on-one. Koonce (1994) enthusiastically promotes coaching:

I tell people, 'this is the best training you'll ever get. It's personal and one-on-one, and it's tailored to your style and needs. We'll work on some new techniques and behaviours to help you build on strengths you already possess, so that you can be more successful in the future' (Koonce, 1994: 36).

Coaching is an individualised, versatile and flexible development approach that can be adapted and applied in the modern day demanding business, where sometimes traditional approaches like classroom learning may falter as managers struggle to juggle the impending priorities and deadlines. Koonce's and

others' magical fix-it descriptions may create scepticism amongst the cautious, and confusion amongst the naïve; arguing that coaching is a development intervention which cultivates independence rather than a teaching instrument that provides knowledge or skill.

After a further ten years of coaching evolution Stern (2004) described coaching senior managers more objectively as:

Executive coaching is an experiential, individualised, leadership development process that builds a leader's capability to achieve short and long-term organizational goals. It is conducted through one-on-one interactions, driven by data from multiple perspectives, and based on mutual trust and respect (Stern, 2004: 154).

Stern (2004) still recognises the one-to-one personal or individualised approach of coaching development for leaders based on their accumulated knowledge or experience from extensive participation in events; but also acknowledges the use of data collected from multiple sources to enhance the experiential process. Stern provides less clarity over how the process builds capability to achieve the goals; and how the basis of mutual trust and respect affects this process.

According to one coaching organisation in Snyder's (1995) article, the purpose of coaching is to get the client to think about a future that is possible, rather than a future that is predictable or a pipe dream. The Ridler Report (2013) describes coaching as an individualised form of development and confirms the perception that even senior level clients regard the value of coaching as thought-provoking to find their own solutions, rather than have suggestions proposed to them. Sherman and Freas (2004) regard it more as an integration of personal development and organisational needs and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) tend to agree that coaching is an effective tool for learning and development (CIPD, 2008).

Executive coaching refers to this human development process or tool involving managers from the business. Originally coining its name due to the involvement of senior management within the business, executive coaching more recently can apply to managers at almost any level (The Ridler Report, 2013) in an

organisation, and even non-managers; but the phrase seems to extensively refer to coaching within the business context. The International Institute of Coaching (IIC) (2010) recognises a difference between executive coaching and business coaching yet there is little differentiation between the two definitions provided except that they argue executive coaching is focussed at Board Level and/or Senior Management level.

In short, coaching in business has evolved since the 1930s and publications of both an empirical and descriptive nature are increasing rapidly in recent times. The empirical base of evidence for coaching is still regarded as low but continues to grow. Coaching activity in organisation is increasing and is becoming more available to all levels of management, not solely to the most senior managers and this widened application in coaching might explain the growing research interest as more people try to understanding coaching, how to apply it effectively and how it differs from other forms of helping disciplines, particularly counselling and mentoring.

### **Differentiating between ‘coaching’, ‘counselling’ and ‘mentoring’**

Currently, the term coaching is used interchangeably and often synonymously with other activities for human development, such as mentoring, and counselling (McLean, 2012; Cox *et al.*, 2010; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010; Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Du Toit, 2007). This leads to confusion by development practitioners and business practitioners over its meaning and application, although there are a number of skills shared in both; for example, listening, questioning, and giving feedback (Cox *et al.*, 2010). Even in contemporary literature, the phrase ‘Coaching and Mentoring’ appears in titles with little attempt to differentiate between the activities. For example, see ‘Coaching and mentoring nursing students’, Haider (2007), ‘Coaching and Mentoring: Enhancing Education’, Berard (2005). The literature highlights that all terminology that is used interchangeably with coaching is vast and cannot extensively be explored in the limitations of this chapter. It is necessary for this research to focus on the differentiation between the following three common descriptors; mentoring, counselling, and coaching.

Matthews describes coaching as:

..... any conversation in which we support another in making progress towards a preferred future (Matthews, 2010: 5).

It could be argued that his explanation of coaching is insufficient as it could equally describe mentoring or even friendship. Hicks and McCracken (2009) discuss the concern over ambiguity in their appropriately titled article, *Mentoring vs. Coaching – Do You Know the Difference?* In it, they distinguish between coaching and mentoring; describing various activities essential during coaching; such as listening, raising self-awareness and providing motivation. They describe mentoring as:

..... the transfer of your knowledge or professional experience to another person to advance their understanding or achievement. It's what we do most of the time when a colleague approaches us with a problem or issue they need help with (Hicks and McCracken, 2009: 71).

Mentoring is distinguished as different from coaching by defining the transfer of knowledge/experience from a more experienced colleague to another. Coaching lacks this outline or definition but focuses on the individual finding their own resolution, guided by the coach. Hicks and McCracken (2009) do expand on their own definition of mentoring by using descriptions such as trusted friend and counsellor to elaborate, potentially creating further confusion between the terms mentoring with counselling. Thomas and Saslow (2007) suggest that mentoring is about transferring information between people with varying amounts of experience. Hicks and McCracken (2009) support Thomas and Saslow's (2007) definition:

Mentoring is defined as a relationship between two people in which a more experienced person agrees to support the development of a less experienced person, traditionally viewed as a protégé and today often referred to as a "mentee" (Thomas and Saslow, 2007: 23).

This definition is suitable to use as a working definition for the purposes of this thesis. Mentoring can occur quite naturally and does not necessarily have to be formalised by recognising the relationship as such. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2010) believe that what one professional sees as coaching, another would perceive as mentoring. Attempting to avoid being pedantic about the argument, Megginson and Clutterbuck (2010) remind professionals that what is important in the relationship is clarity and understanding expectations between the two people involved. They claim that mentoring is about the nurturing of potential in a person and that the mentor's role is to help individuals develop insight and understanding through increased awareness of their own experiences; however this is arguably true of coaching. Megginson and Clutterbuck's (2010) description lacks the acknowledgement of the value that the mentor has in providing essential direction from a mentor's own experience and learning from mistakes and successes. Hicks and McCracken (2009) refer to this as the transfer of knowledge or professional experience to advance the mentee's understanding or achievement.

Cox *et al.* (2010) also recognise that commonly found attempts to describe coaching fail to distinguish between it and other well used terms for a helping strategy; providing training, mentoring and counselling as examples of synonyms. Even the founding figure in contemporary coaching psychology Grant's (2000) definition of coaching, in Cox *et al.* (2010), being essentially to help the 'mentally healthy' clientele is regarded as unsatisfactory for many practical and ethical reasons; although they fail to expand on the reasons. Cox *et al.* (2010) continue that attempts to define coaching based on process are also problematic as they include characteristics that cannot distinguish between coaching and other helping professionals, although research into the process of coaching is still scarce so this judgement may be premature. To compound the issue, Cox *et al.* (2010) cite Bachkirova (2007) who argues that most attempted definitions of coaching fail because:

...they also include characteristics that are so specific or just desirable, that they cannot be attributed to all the various forms of coaching (Bachkirova, 2007 in Cox *et al.*, 2010: 2).

The suggestion that coaching definitions are inaccurate because they are so specific raises the following question; rather than the definitions being inaccurate, could it be that the practice of coaching is now so broad and diluted with non-coaching approaches, techniques and tools that the reality of contemporary coaching contributes to semantic confusion?

Brock (2010) acknowledges the difficulties in trying to simplify a definition of coaching, recognising that coaching 'sprang from several independent sources and spread through relationships' (4). In practice she argues, coaching is applied neither uniformly nor rigidly, but dynamically and in context; customised to the specific conditions that promoted its evolution. The application of intuition, creativity and flexibility encourages this organic and fluid phenomenon:

The key message here is that the definition of coaching is not fixed. How coaching is done depends on the coach, client, context and situation (Brock, 2010: 8).

This may start to explain why coaching is so difficult to define in definitive and non-ambiguous or metaphoric terms. Defining it cannot just be about how it is practiced. Any definition should focus on what coaching is; its scope and meaning. As coaching and mentoring are used so commonly as synonyms in the workplace, it may be prudent to consider the view that although a session might perceivably be regarded as a coaching session, and the strategy adopted by the coach predominantly be coaching, the coach may also use mentoring and instructional or "tell and do" techniques within that session to promote a client's development. Some might refer to this as *directive* coaching. For the purposes of this study, instruction is described as a prescriptive or directive approach; telling the employee what and how to do something. Instruction typically involved face-to-face 'on the job' interaction intended to master a skill by copying established or skilled employees (Reid and Barrington, 1999: 16). The four stages of the instruction approach are: Tell – Show – Do – Review.

A similar view of directive coaching is held by Blakey and Day (2013) who point out that if a coach 'holds back for fear of being directive' it would be disingenuous and not best serve the interest of the client (36). So, should activities included in



a 'coaching session' remain exclusively coaching or is it acceptable that more directive approaches, like mentoring and instructional techniques and tools can equally be applied? If this view is accepted as feasible, could the same argument be levelled at counselling, or is the nature of counselling somewhat different?

Although to give counsel means to give advice and guidance (Collins Gems, 2004), the use of the word counselling can often suggest a more therapeutic strategy intended to mend, provide treatment or resolve an issue, problem or need. Scotland's professional body for Counselling and Psychotherapy (COSCA) describes counselling as a way of:

..... responding to a wide range of human needs. These include distress associated with what are sometimes called "problems in living", and deeply felt need to make changes in one's life (COSCA, 2014: Counselling and Psychotherapy).

This description doesn't really distinguish it much from coaching as both are problem solving approaches. This may indicate why the two terminologies are often used interchangeably. There is however, a suggestion of a more serious 'need' or concern than might be addressed through coaching; ones that involve distress and identified as 'problems in living'. Although there are further definitions provided below, the one by COSCA (2014) will serve as a benchmark for defining counselling. Blakey and Day (2013) hint that as coaching has evolved from therapy the core principles between the disciplines are expected to be very similar. In critically reviewing De Board's (1983) book, *Counselling People at Work*, Richard R Camp identifies a counselling definition provided as:

..... that style of helping which is client-centred and involves the client (i.e., employee) in solving the problem (De Board, 1983, in Camp: 197).

This definition suggests that counselling is a problem-solving technique but does not differentiate it from coaching or even mentoring. The Chartered Management Institute's (2010) checklist on Counselling Your Colleagues describes counselling in more detail:

A set of skills used by one person to help another clarify concerns, come to terms with feelings, and take responsibility for difficulties, and begin to resolve problems or issues. Counselling does not involve giving advice, or providing or managing solutions to the problems experienced by their client or colleague (Chartered Management Institute, 2010: 1).

Here the definition refers to anxieties or worries, and accepting or dealing with problems. This definition is noteworthy because, although the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) recognises that counselling is about resolving problems they recommend against giving advice or providing solutions; the solutions should be provided by the person being counselled. This is contrary to the earlier definition provided in the dictionary about counselling. One could argue that, unless the professional is a trained counsellor, they should not be providing advice of this nature anyway. The Dictionary of Human Resource Management (2001) believe that when using counselling skills in training and development, solutions should be sought from the person receiving the development, as some believe of coaching. This argument, supported by the Dictionary of Human Resource Management (2001), says:

Counselling is the provision of supportive and confidential advice to employees to help them overcome problems and cope with work or home-based crises. It may be offered by trained counsellors within a company welfare service or by specialist outside agencies. The kinds of situations in which employers offer counselling include redundancy, harassment, stress management, and in dealing with health problems, such as alcoholism or drug abuse (Dictionary of HRM, 2001: 65).

Here the use of counselling is suggested for personal situations that involve crises or coping. It does not suggest that counselling is used as a personal development tool, as opposed to mentoring and coaching. This definition is supported by Young and Nicol (2007) who describe counselling psychology as fostering and improving normal human function by helping people to solve problems, make decisions and cope with the stresses of everyday life. They do suggest that the work of counselling psychology is generally used with well-adjusted people, and is a recognised speciality within the practice of professional psychology.

The concern that some psychologists (Kilburg, 2004; Wasylyshyn, 2003, Kilburg, 2004) have with practicing coaches is that a practitioner, who is not adequately trained in psychology, may start to unearth deep-seated problems for which they are insufficiently trained to deal with; leaving the client vulnerable and in a worse position than before the problems had been uprooted. This concern is underlined when often unexpected psychological problems are identified during a coaching session. Although it might be wise for the coach to refer the client to more specialised help at this stage, the concern is twofold: the problem has already been awoken and therefore needs to be dealt with without delay; many coaches might not recognise the depth of the problem and continue to try to resolve it, or even worse ignore it as insignificant. It could be argued that these situations are relatively uncommon and therefore when such a situation does occur, it relies on the responsibility and professionalism of the coach to adopt the right course of action; as it would with any professional if such a situation occurred during a development situation or even a general conversation.

Coaching aims to bring about modifications by triggering 'cognitive and behavioural change' in the client and subsequently the organisation (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011: 255). Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) contend that clinical psychology is about behaviour change and people development. This suggests that coaching is therefore grounded in the field of psychology:

Psychology is both an applied and academic field that studies the human mind and behaviour. Research in psychology seeks to understand and explain how we think, act and feel. Applications for psychology include mental health treatment, performance enhancement, self-help, ergonomics and many other areas affecting health and daily life (Cherry, 2013: Basics).

Although coaching isn't looking to explain actions from the past it does focus on altering behaviour to enhance performance, and increase self-awareness of behaviour and the impact it has had. Berglas refers to coaching as 'an acceptable form of psychotherapy' (Berglas, 2002: 88). One should, he claims, accept that coaching is a powerful tool and if used inappropriately can be hugely detrimental to more than just the client.

However, if coaches were to be excluded from practice due to their lack of psychological training, then the same argument might equally be levelled at trainers, educationalists, and sports coaches alike; since their actions might also affect the behaviours of their students. Berglas (2002) recognises this and advocates that safeguards be put in place, suggesting psychological evaluations on clients before coaching commences and choosing appropriately skilled and well qualified coaches to conduct the development. The practicalities of implementing this action and the impact that persuading recipients to undergo a psychological evaluation before receiving some development might outweigh the desire to continue, in reality.

There are some clear overlaps of definitions and skills between coaching and mentoring. Confusion over definition and demarcation however, are not to be unexpected since coaching has evolved from other person-centred helping therapies (Blakey and Day, 2013). Misunderstanding of terminology can be compounded if mentoring skills or a directive approach is applied when coaching a client, although a coach might defend such action as acting in the best interest of the client's development. Such approaches should be discussed and clarified during the contracting stage of the intervention.

The table below (Table 1) has been compiled to summarise some of the key descriptions of the terminology through this review of the literature.

**Table 1:** Summary of Terminology

Term	Situation	Key characteristics	Common characteristics
Coach	Development	Explores plausible options before client chooses solution, comes from person being developed, and promotes sustainable and desirable changes, advice not given.	Client takes responsibility Client makes own informed choice Client-focussed For well-adjusted people
Mentor	Development	Comes from mentor, nurturing potential, benefit gained from mentor's experience/knowledge, learn from mistakes, knowledge/experience transfer	
Counsel	Help through crisis or coping	Mends or resolves issue / problem, comes to terms with own situation / feelings, crises coping, advice not given.	

Applying counselling approaches in coaching is, however, subject to criticism. Cox et al. (2010) note that Rogers (2004) advocates that, coaches with a background in psychology or counselling should refrain from counselling when contracted to coach with a client. Coaches should recognise their experience and training limitations and clients who require counselling should be referred to an appropriate counsellor and in a suitable session to address their needs.

Referrals for coaching may take place within an organisation (internal). For example, a senior manager may suggest that a manager seek further support or development and direct the manager to internal resources such as the Human Resources (HR) department. In a busy and demanding environment the role of the HR professional and the purpose of the interaction may need clarification and agreement. Is the manager seeking developmental help and require a Coach or are they needing some therapeutic stress relief from a Therapist?

## **Therapist or Coach?**

Internal coaches have been used effectively as change agents within organisations (Rock and Donde, 2008) and internal coaching provides a strong framework for deepening connections within an organisation, increasing the impact of coaching and subsequent improved performance. Coaching has had reported proven impact but Goldsmith (2004) showed that internal coaching could produce results as positive as those results using external coaching (Rock and Donde, 2008).

Coaching can, however prove more complicated for internal coaches due to the interlocking relationships within the organisation. There may be additional pressure from senior business leaders for internal coaches to blur boundaries to achieve results; pressure which suggests that if results are not achieved by internal coaching, external coaches will be brought in to address the issues.

For internal coaches, managing the boundary between a coaching role 'and their 'day job' is one of the most common challenges encountered' according to St John-Brooks (2014: 37). St John-Brooks (2014) continues that for internal coaches who work in departments that are central to the organisation, such as learning and development, role conflict could rise exponentially. This arises from the simple fact that internal coaches will know many people in the organisation that the client is talking about during their coaching session.

Coaching can be seen as therapeutic where the client is able to talk about the pressures of day to day work in confidence. Bono, Purvanova, Towler and Peterson (2009), in their research into the differences in disciplines between psychologist and non-psychologist coaches, recognise there is a lack of clarity separating coaching from therapy, but Parsloe and Leedham (2009) caution that coaching sessions may seem therapeutic to clients but should not become therapy. Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) acknowledge how easy it is to use the coach as a 'safe place to discuss issues when there are so few people one can trust' (41). This reflects a bleak image of business practice if so little trust is evident in the workplace.

Therapy is a job for specialists and coaches need to recognise the 'boundaries of 'normal' stress and anxiety from those behaviours that border on clinical dysfunction' (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 17). The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) Code of Ethics (2010) expects coaches should be clear on what they are competent to coach on:

At all times operate within the limits of their own competence, recognise where that competence has the potential to be exceeded and where necessary refer the client either to a more experienced coach/mentor, or support the client in seeking the help of another professional, such as a counsellor, psychotherapist or business/financial advisor (EMCC, 2010: 2).

Making internal coaches aware of this is important, especially given that some internal coaches may not subscribe to professional bodies that specialise in coaching, even though most professional bodies should enforce this in principle.

For internal coaches, the practical nature of ethical dilemmas can be challenging and different to those of external coaches. Consequently, it is important that processes and support are put in place to minimise the risk of making poor decisions. Awareness of additional support and guidance from colleagues and professional bodies in areas such as ethical and conduct expectations should be shared and agreed. Internal coaching can achieve positive results and has the advantage of coaches understanding the cultures and internal workings of organisations. It is unfortunate that the importance of external coaches is sometimes over-estimated (Rock and Donde, 2008) in preference to the benefits of internal ones.

Coaching continues to evolve achieving great results by increasing performance in organisations. Proclaiming a clear cut definition of coaching could prove too constricting and inhibit the flexible and eclectic approach that has steered the success of coaching to date. Coaching continues to grow organically and currently unregulated, nurtured by psychology trained and non-psychology trained professionals from neighbouring disciplines (i.e. mentoring, counselling and therapy) and business; guided by a number of professional bodies who continue to promote standards of conduct and research into coaching.

## **Professional Bodies of Coaching**

As coaching has become so widespread 'there has been pressure to form networks and associations that can lead to representative bodies bringing some coherence into an emerging profession in the UK' (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 8). Their purpose has been to educate practitioners and share knowledge and research, raising the awareness and standards of coaching. The beneficial impact of having a collection of like-minded people, rather than just one person, is greater. Coaches may feel they are part of a community which can further their career goals.

Representing the Human Resource (HR) professionals within general business, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has played a leading role to encourage collaboration with other leading bodies on the best practice for coaching professionals. The British Psychological Society (BPS) has taken a more 'defensive attitude and has emphasised the case for psychologists leading the debate' (Parsloe and Leedham, 2009: 8).

Today there are a number of professional coaching bodies that serve to provide guidance on best practice and ethical responsibility for both coaches and coaching psychology practitioners. Palmer and Whybrow (2008) have listed ten bodies and identified three which are Coaching Psychology bodies:

- Australian Psychological Society, Interest Group in Coaching Psychology
- British Psychological Society, Special Group in Coaching Psychology
- Federation for Swiss Psychologists, Swiss Society for Coaching Psychology (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008: Appendix 1)

The chartered psychologist, Passmore (2010), also acknowledges that there are fourteen professional coach and coach psychology bodies that have supported the research for his book.

The purpose of the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology is to develop the profession by providing a platform to share experiences and knowledge. The



vision is to become the leading authority in coaching psychology and to support the profession's development:

The Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) was established to provide psychologists with a means of sharing research as well as practical experiences that relate to the psychology of coaching. As SGCP has developed the focus is not just on coaching psychologists, but also on coaches who are interested in using psychology in their coaching (SGCP, 2009: About Us).

The key bodies for Coach Practitioners are:

- Association for Coaching
- Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS)
- European Mentoring and Coaching Council
- International Association for Coaching
- International Coach Federation
- Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC)

(Palmer and Whybrow, 2008: Appendix 1)

The purpose of many of the professional coaching bodies is also to raise the standards and awareness of coaching (Association of Coaching, 2013) and to advance the profession by providing a 'stimulating forum for individuals engaged in buying or delivering professional coaching and supervision' (APECS, 2013: About). Many offer additional resources and provide blogs and forums for dialogue between members. The subscription for membership varies in cost and membership is sometimes dependant on experience and/or qualifications. There is no mandatory requirement for a practicing coach to subscribe to, or register with any of the professional bodies.

There is often a one-off administration charge to join a professional body and subscription costs range from £40 (for a Student member of the CIPD) to £100 for a standard individual member (European Mentoring and Coaching Council) with no experience or qualification required. The Association for Coaching (AfC) offers an Individual Full Membership at £89 plus an administration cost, as long as the individual can demonstrate either 200 hours of coaching practice and 50 hours of training towards coaching practice, or 100 hours of training and 150 hours of

coaching practice. The EMCC offer the cheapest subscription cost and requires no experience or qualification. Most have a one-off administration cost.

Within the coaching industry there is no restriction on anyone calling themselves a coach or even who might provide training for coaches. The growing industry has encouraged people to develop as coaches and in doing so many have sought out further training, development and accreditation by organisations and associated bodies. In order for the industry to sustain itself during great growth and to enable effective delivery of coaching services Passmore (2010) claims that there is a requirement for robust accreditation systems. Poor coaching can be detrimental to all parties involved although it should also be recognised that being trained or qualified doesn't give exemption from poor practice. Since there is no regulation or registration within the coaching industry on who is trained, developed or even effective, accreditation or even development remains an aspiration of best practice rather than a requirement:

Primarily, accreditation is presented as a means of protecting the client and assuring client safety. As a subheading to this initial purpose, one could assume that accreditation enhances standards of practice (Passmore, 2010: 241).

Here Passmore (2010) uses the terminology 'client' to represent the person being coached.

By way of contrast the Chiropractic profession works under statutory regulation. Under the Chiropractors Act 1994, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) was instituted as a statutory body set up with three main duties:

1. Protecting the public by regulating Chiropractors
2. Setting the standards of Chiropractic education, conduct and practice
3. Ensuring the development of the profession

Anyone calling themselves a Chiropractor in the United Kingdom must be registered or they are committing a criminal offence. In order to register an individual must satisfy the educational requirements for registration (GCC, 2013). In order to be regulated the profession must follow an 'authoritative' rule, which in

the Chiropractors' case is the rule of statute. There is currently no such equivalent for the coaching profession. Coaching remains an unregulated industry (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007), which means that almost anyone can claim to be a coach and set up business with little or no qualification, licence or experience.

Professional Bodies associated with specific fields and disciplines provide resources, accreditation, association and guidelines for standards of practice. They can provide a source of resources which will support practitioners in their field and often advertise specific qualifications to pursue. There are a number of professional bodies which offer access to similar benefits so for someone who subscribes to multiple bodies there is frequently duplication of benefits which can reduce the cost effectiveness of the subscription.

Considering four professional bodies (International Coach Federation (ICF) UK Chapter, European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) UK Chapter, Association for Coaching (AfC) and the British Psychological Society (BPS)) all of them offer the following benefits;

- Globally recognised credentials
- Continuing development opportunities
- Local groups, networks and communities
- Conferences and events
- Magazine, journal and newsletter
- Discounts on development and insurance

Only the EMCC does not promote access to research and library resources.

For individuals who may be mainly generalists but occasional specialists, subscribing to multiple bodies can become costly with little added value for money. The professional bodies do promote good standards and ethical practice to those already committed to improving their skills by joining the professional bodies. Arguably, those who are not members or those who may need more guidance in conduct and behaviour can choose not to recognise the associations and continue their practice as they see fit, without the additional expense of the annual membership.

## **Codes of Ethics and Good Practice Guidelines**

Despite the lack of regulation, the bodies which endorse coaching practice are committed to encouraging excellence in practice. Ethics is defined as ‘the moral principles that govern a person’s behaviour’ (St John-Brooks, 2014: 66). Passmore (2010) describes the purpose of ethics within coaching as the ‘essence and underpinning of good coaching’, which protect both the coach and person receiving coaching (204). The pursuit of sound ethics is more important than the training that a coach may receive, explaining that if a coach acts ethically he or she can more than make up for the lack of training:

Often, ethics is concisely and simply described as the science of morality. Morality here is understood as a collection of relative judgements people make on what is right or wrong, good or bad, in relations between people or groups of people (Passmore, 2010: 205).

Passmore is not suggesting that a coach forfeit the need to develop and learn but is demonstrating the importance of the moral and obligatory standards which are expected of a coach from society and from the coaching fraternity. Demonstrating poor ethical judgement could have repercussions not only for that particular coach, but on the reputation of coaching as a profession.

There is an expectation that members adhere to the standards set out by their respective professional bodies. Many of the professional bodies now promote the code of ethics and allow access to it on their website. When reviewing the website of the BPS, ICF UK, EMCC UK, and AfC, all promoted the code of ethics on their respective sites. The International Coach Federation (ICF) requires its members to sign a statement of agreement on ethical conduct as part of their application and renewal for accreditation (St John-Brooks, 2014):

The Association for Coaching is committed to maintaining and promoting excellence in coaching practice. It therefore expects all members, whether coaches or coaching supervisors, to adhere to the essential elements of ethical, competent and effective practice

as set out in this Code of Ethics and Good Practice (Association for Coaching, 2013: Code of Ethics and Good Practice).

A code of ethics provides a benchmark for practicing coaches to adhere to and also provides guidance on what a person receiving coaching can expect. Observation and assessment of the standards in practice relies on the person receiving coaching to report behaviour or activities which fall outside the code. However, as St John-Brooks (2014) says, coaches who are not members of a particular professional body may be unaware of the importance and benefit of this guidance and could find themselves acting unintentionally unethically.

Although this supports the argument that all practicing coaches should receive appropriate training, to include ethical awareness, it still does not resolve the issue that currently there is no mandatory requirement to do so. One might argue that the coach who is more likely to act unethically is least likely to be concerned with pursuing qualifications and training in the discipline. This is not to suggest that any coach who is not a member of a professional coaching body is somehow unethical. There may be a number of reasons why membership is not taken up; for example, financial restrictions, perceived value for money, duplication of benefits with another professional body already subscribed to.

Coaching has become widely accepted both in business and professional organisations with few barriers to individuals establishing themselves as coaches yet regardless of this 'coaching operates independently of oversight by any one professional body or government' (Cox *et al.*, 2010: 369). For those coaches who, for example have a generalist learning and development occupation, who might interact in coaching activities on occasion rather than frequently, there are professional bodies that they are encouraged to be members of, for example the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) or the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) is the 'professional body for HR and people development' (CIPD, 2013: About) and regard themselves as the 'experts on the world of work'. A Royal Charter enables the

CIPD to confer individual chartered status on over 53,000 of its 130,000 members (CIPD, 2013). The CIPD have recently revised their Code of Professional Conduct (July 2012):

Every CIPD member irrespective of grade of membership should be concerned with the maintenance of good practice within the profession. All members must commit themselves to adhere to this Code of Professional Conduct which sets out the standards of professional behaviour (CIPD, 2013: Code of Professional Conduct).

Introducing the Code of Professional Conduct the CIPD encourages its members to maintain high standards of behaviour and competence:

Membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) is a recognised benchmark of professionalism within the field of HR. The CIPD sets high standards of entry for professional members and requires a firm commitment to continuous professional development. It also requires all members to adhere to the standards set out in this Code of Professional Conduct (CIPD, 2012: 1).

The key principles of four professional bodies are shown below on page 49 (Table 2) to illustrate the common areas. The examples chosen represent a professional body for coaching (Global site) (AfC), a professional body representing general HR professionals in the United Kingdom (CIPD), a professional body for coaching and mentoring in Europe (EMCC), and the professional body for psychologists (BPS) in Britain:

- Association for Coaches (AfC)
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC)
- British Psychological Society (BPS)

The Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct documents provide guidelines that coaches and professionals are expected to adhere to. Practicing coaches follow these through voluntary and ethical obligation rather than because of statutory regulation. Most professional bodies highly recommend subscription to individuals as it provides benefits and services such as networking events, professional

development, business development, access to publications, discounted rates on various goods and services, involvement in future development of the profession's sector (AfC, 2013).

**Table 2: Principles of Professional Bodies' Codes of Conduct and Ethics**

<b>Professional Bodies</b>	<b>AfC (2013)</b>	<b>CIPD (2012)</b>	<b>EMCC (2008)</b>	<b>BPS ( 2009)</b>
<b>Key Principles</b>	Fitness to practice	Professional Competence and Behaviour	Competence	Respect
	Maintaining Good Practice	Representative of the Profession	Context	Competence
	Contracting	Ethical Standards and Integrity	Boundary Management	Responsibility
	Statutory and Legal Duties	Stewardship	Integrity	Integrity
			Professionalism	

According to a Pricewaterhouse Cooper (2007) study, commissioned by the International Coach Federation (ICF), approximately 65% of the 30,000 coaches worldwide were members of at least one professional body (Cox *et al.*, 2010). This suggests that 35% are not members of a professional body at all and may not be aware of the existence of a code of ethics that members are assumed to demonstrate commitment to. Being a member of a professional body builds public confidence (Cox *et al.*, 2010), provides additional credentials and in some but not all cases is proof of qualification, competence and experience. It is not obligatory but does reflect association and may indicate some commitment to the principles of the professional body.

Coaches might become members of particular bodies for the perceived association or 'badge' rather than any belief or loyalty to the principles it reflects. The Ridler Report (2013) points out that 'accountability to the coach's professional body for upholding their ethical code can give sponsor organisations much needed reassurance that the coach will work in an ethical way' (12) but this could

be construed as an incentive *not* to be a member of a professional body; since then there is no one to report perceived unethical behaviour to.

Most, if not all professional bodies, associated with any discipline will promote a standard ethical conduct to raise the standards and reputation of practice. It is assumed that members are firstly aware of them and secondly will commit to them. Membership of professional bodies is not obligatory and members can demonstrate a passive adherence to the codes. Subscription to professional bodies can become expensive, especially when multiple professions are relevant.

The guidelines are good disciplines to promote but those who do not subscribe or who are not active subscribers can still practice unaware of their existence or benefit. For those who have pursued more formal training and development, the benefits of subscribing to professional bodies may have been outlined during their programme but as the coaching industry remains unregulated, it is inevitable that some practicing coaches may not be aware of the benefits such associations offer.

### **A Question of Qualifications and Regulation.**

Smither, 2011, Cox *et al.* (2010) and Sherman and Freas (2004) all acknowledge that the coaching industry is littered with people professing to be coaches, some with hardly a qualification to support their claim. They recognise that poor coaching can be detrimental to all parties involved. In some situations even the most relevant qualifications may be inappropriate; if the coach is too naïve or inexperienced in business to win a client's trust, for example. Sherman and Freas (2004) argue that coaching is best practiced by someone with acute perception, diplomacy, sound judgement and integrity; distilled as much from the coach's personal experience as from formal training. This does not go far enough for some though when considering the credibility and business acumen required when coaching.

Stern (2004), Kilburg (2004) and Wasylyshyn (2003) all feel that more is required from a coach to ensure the most effective process, facilitated by the most appropriate coach. The recent Ridler Report (2013) found that business credibility



was important when initiating the relationship with the client and sponsor but generally its value had dropped in importance once the coaching intervention had started. The exception to this was that senior managers did expect coaches to have business experience, which enhanced their credibility and gravitas.

Although the coach is not necessarily the perceived technical expert in the partnership, he should have some experience in the field within which he operates. Drake (2011) also maintains that a coach should not be perceived as an expert and advises that coaches should participate in regular feedback and development activities to 'develop higher levels of thinking and more powerful interventions' (Drake, 2011: 149). Stern (2004) thinks the coach should, as a minimum, have some idea of business and leadership skills. He outlines that a coach should have basic knowledge in psychology, business management, organisational dynamics and leadership development (Stern, 2004: 160). The recent Organisational Coaching Study, which solicited views from people within organisations who make decisions about coaching, found that 'external coaches were felt to have a lack of understanding of the company culture' which internal coaches already held (ICF, 2013: 8). External coaches were felt to have experience with leadership, something that internal coaches were felt to be lacking. Stern warns:

Expecting coaches with little prior applicable knowledge or experience to be able to meet the complex demands of an executive and his or her organization is like expecting a person off the street to do eye surgery with a few days of discussion about vision and a few hours of lab work (Stern, 2004: 160).

Stern makes a good point which is likely to be welcomed by those coaches who have spent valuable resources like time and money training, gaining qualifications in coaching and can combine this with applicable knowledge and experience. Stern (2004) is not alone in his suggestion that a coach should also be trained in psychology. Smither (2011) indicates that clients want coaches to have graduate training in psychology. Wasylyshyn (2003) also conforms to this, claiming that as trained psychologists, it is second nature to maintain stringent ethical standards regarding confidentiality and managing the boundaries of the relationship. Stern (2004), Wasylyshyn (2003) and Kilburg (2004) have high

expectations of the psychology qualifications and business experience coaches must have but research comparing the effectiveness of psychology trained coaches against non-psychology trained coaches by Bono, Purvanova, Towler, and Peterson's (2009) found little difference (average  $d=0.26$ ).

Internal coaching is not without its challenges. The Annual Survey Report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008), claims that a variety of people from within the organisation have the responsibility, although not necessarily the expertise, for coaching, including line managers, human resource specialists, and learning and development specialists. However, the report fails to define coaching and, therefore, the activities that they refer to may be synonyms for instructional, directive coaching or even mentoring that managers undertake.

Line managers may not be able to detach themselves from their work situation and role or act objectively but arguably external coaches also have disadvantages. If a coach is to remain neutral or independent a line manager may not be best placed to take such a role. This point is also supported by St John-Brooks (2014), Matthews (2010), Whitmore (2003) and Fournies (2000). Equally, internal employees coaching senior people may experience a power struggle (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011) or conflict of interest if they perceive personal progress as a benefit in kind for coaching the client.

In contrast, the external coach may not be familiar with the culture of the business and may not understand the political influences and pressure brought to bear in the organisation. The external coaches will undoubtedly come at a financial cost too. Matthews (2010) also acknowledges that external coaches have their limitations although he argues these might be perceived as advantages, pushing the boundaries of self-imposed authorities, perceived cultures or assumptions. External coaches do not always appreciate the position they hold of not knowing, and encouraging ownership of the action developed by the client, Matthews (2010) writes. When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of involving an external coach, he says:

An external 'executive' coach, brought from the outside into an organisation can enjoy the 'luxury' of independent detachment (Matthews, 2010: 4).

Independent detachment, as Matthews (2010) puts it, or not having a direct connection with the organisation or client like a manager might have, could also indicate a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the culture and operations of an organisation.

Coaching is reported to be a powerful process that can bring about results that are far in advance of expectations (Matthews, 2010). Matthews considers the claimed benefits of coaching displayed on many a consultancy's webpage:

It is an impressive list (of benefits) and when you have claims from coaching consultancies that "coaching is the single most powerful process ever devised for releasing human potential", we seem as coaches to be making some grand claims for what we do (Matthews, 2010: 2).

Matthews (2010) questions whether it is too easy to oversell coaching, but continues by confirming that, when delivered by independent practitioners external to the organisation, coaching can and often does deliver such benefits. This claim is not supported by further data and again does not specify the qualifications and experience of the external coaches, or further specific cases. Maybe an area for future research is to compare differing development approaches to find which are the most powerful in releasing human potential, if such a concept could be measured.

Altman (2007) also challenges whether coaching can only be carried out by qualified professional coaches or whether independent internal coaches, like Human Resources (HR) and line managers, can execute the role equally. He claims that, regrettably, in our haste to implement coaching programmes many coaches or line managers are often ill prepared and inadequately trained, failing to meet the expectations of those they are coaching. The survey undertaken by ICF (2013) found that internal coaches in organisation had received a wide spectrum in the level and amount of training received to be a coach. Some had

received training which was aligned to the ICF core competencies but some had received very little:

...there were a few organizations with “internal coaches” as they were described, but who had received very minimal internal training, a couple of days or even less (ICF, 2013: 9).

A previous coaching study undertaken by the ICF reported that 43% of the respondents felt ‘untrained individuals who call themselves coaches were viewed as the main future obstacle for coaching over the next 12 months’ (ICF, 2012: 12). The report does not clarify whether the respondents considered internal coaches to be included in this challenge or whether the conclusion was directed mainly at external coaches who might be perceived as competition for their services. Approximately two thirds of the 12,133 respondents to this survey were ICF members; the remaining 4,400 were non-members. Although a further breakdown of responses was not available, one wonders if the challenge of untrained coaches could be perceived more accurately as resentment by those active coaches who have spent resources on training.

Even when empirical research looks at successful coaching, people participating have varied qualifications. Empirical research supporting the conclusion that coaching has a beneficial impact on clients was undertaken by sixty eight external coaches (Bozer and Sarros, 2012). 47% of them were not members of a professional association, 55% had no training in learning and development, 38% had no background in psychology, and 10% had no background in management. However, 54% said that executive coaching was their major current profession and 82% were independent or self-employed coaches.

Sperry (2008) argues that there is still ambiguity towards the function and definition of coaching. He clearly outlines his expectations that the coach should be trained although does not specify the field of expertise; i.e. whether the training should be in psychology or coaching. In his description of executive psychotherapy he calls for the professional to be trained and licensed, functioning as a therapist to resolve work-related problems, although acknowledging that this process should be briefer than a conventional psychotherapist.

Certainly, if one subscribes to the arguments of trained-psychologists Kilburg (2004), Wasylyshyn (2003), Sherman and Freas (2004), Stern (2004), and Berglas (2002), an external psychology-trained coach will provide certain qualities and standards that are not always present with business managers. In contrast, the CIPD (2008) and Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) suggest that an independent role within the organisation might make the most effective coaches, avoiding any conflict of interest which might be experienced when an external person enters certain sensitive environments. Dunlop's (2006) research into team coaching supports the internal resource as coach and urges that organisations should consider this rather than looking for consultants or experts who can provide teams with an answer to their challenges:

Such evidence indicates that in some instances, it may be beneficial for a coach to know little about the team apart from understanding the wider team context (Dunlop, 2006: 39).

Dunlop (2006) suggests that knowledge of the wider context might be useful but acknowledges that having assumptions or preconceived ideas on the person or people being coached will not be useful and may in fact detriment the coaching process. A survey of views from people who make decisions about coaching in organisations found that the importance of reputation of the coach, referrals and recommendations, experience of who the coach had been working with and the chemistry between coach and client rated much higher than credentials, certification, accreditation and academic background (ICF, 2013).

More clarity over coaching practice and relevant qualifications might attract greater success, but the move towards regulation could potentially push a greater wedge between the qualified and non-qualified. A lack of knowledge and understanding of the impact that coaching could have might potentially do harm to clients if coaches are dealing with psychological and emotional issues that they are not trained to deal with. Would the level of qualification and appropriate experience of a coach, which is generally reflected in their pricing framework, influence organisations with poorer budgets to look for the less qualified and accept the potential risk to employees? As interest in coaching continues, more

qualifications become available and research around coaching increases. This raises the issue of whether coaching is an occupation or a profession and consequently whether it should be regulated.

### **Is Coaching a Qualification, Intervention or a Role Function?**

Gray (2011) defines the term 'profession' to mean to profess or to declare oneself skilled and expert in a given context; claiming social recognition. When there exists an effective demand for the occupational skill from a large enough consumer group, a profession will emerge, according to Gray (2011). He acknowledges that coaching has made some 'important steps towards professionalisation' (14) and describes 'professionalisation' as a process in which a profitable activity moves from 'occupation' status to that of 'profession', providing a benchmark or standard of conduct for others to follow. Gray (2011) finds that coaching falls short of satisfying the three criteria for an occupation to claim professional status;

- I. It requires extensive training
- II. It is based upon an intellectual skill
- III. Its services are important (Bayles, 1988 in Gray, 2011: 5)

Practitioners who are in demand from clients might argue that these criteria have already been satisfied. Coaches who practice (successfully) with little training could object to the first point. The Ridler Report (2013) confirms that some organisations encourage internal coaches to practice with only 2 days of training and sometimes less; suggesting that extensive training is not required to coach and therefore it should not be eligible to become a profession.

If successful at gaining professional status from the State or society, Gray (2011) explains that the profession is granted a degree of autonomy in exchange for self-regulation, enforcing standards of professional development and ethical practice. Brock (2010) doubts whether such containment could, or should be legislated using a code of ethics or a standard of coaching, due to the nature of coaching. She explains that 'It is critical to be coach-like in interactions with others both

within and without the coaching field' (Brock, 2010: 16). Brock acknowledges that this might affect the perception of coaching either positively or negatively.

Brock defines 'coach-like' as 'collaborative and inclusive, valuing people for their contribution, and facilitating change through self-directed learning and personal growth' (Brock, 2010:14) and as coaching continues to innovatively evolve, she believes it needs to encourage diversity and inclusion. This notion may need further clarification from Brock, as many practitioners and researchers would be aghast at a suggestion that it is acceptable for a coach to behave unethically in a given situation in order to 'live coaching moment by moment in each interaction' (Brock, 2010: 16).

Professional bodies from many various disciplines provide guidelines in ethical and acceptable behaviour. For many professional bodies of coaching membership is not dependent on the level of training or qualifications a member has received but does require registration. However, the guidelines are available to visitors of the respective webpages, assuming visitors are aware and motivated to look for them. Many coaching bodies provide opportunities for coaches to register, often at a renewable membership cost, and provide standards of practice to adhere to and abide by. Examples of these standards can be found under the ethics pages of bodies such as the International Coach Federation (I.C.F.) or the International Coaching Association (I.C.A.).

Shuit describes the coaching industry as 'the most grossly under-regulated profession on the planet' (Shuit, 2005: 5) and doesn't differentiate between coaches internal or external to organisations. There is no regulation; no law, rule or order prescribed by any authority to hold certain qualifications or experience in order to practice coaching. Although commendable for subscribers to do so, there is no regulation which requires it by licence to practice and if clients do not request such certification, it relies on the coach to decide if the benefits will outweigh the financial cost. To placate such an argument, the I.C.A. claim that:

Certification is formal recognition by the International Coaching Association that an individual has demonstrated a professional level of knowledge and competence in coaching methodologies and principles including: ethical practices, subject matter knowledge, recognized coaching standards, and working knowledge of the materials supplied by the International Coaching Association to promote best practices in the coaching industry. The International Coaching Association certification is a professional designation and encompasses assessment of coaching competence as well as peer recognition. International Coaching Association certification is not a registration or licensure (I.C.A., 2009: why become certified).

Regardless of where the coach is sourced, it remains a considerable concern for some that the industry is still unregulated; allowing, and frequently encouraging, people with little experience or knowledge of coaching, let alone psychology, to practice under the title of coach. The impact of this behaviour further adds to the confusion and ambiguity of practice. For some, the perceived risk of detriment to the recipient is increased because coaches are untrained and unqualified to appropriately deal with any deep-rooted issues, should they be raised. Maxwell (2009) found in her studies that the coach and client shaped the position of the boundary, depending on the willingness to explore psychological and personal dynamics. She says that coaches and clients will apply a level of self-regulation avoiding any territory they perceive as uncomfortable.

Coaching is an intervention that requires trust in the relationship between coach, client and sponsor. The initial meetings between the tripartite, which constitute the contracting in the engagement, will establish the foundations of the trusting relationship. Regardless of whether a coach is internal or external to the organisation, whether the coach is qualified and trained, a coaching engagement requires an amount of mutual trust to be constructive and productive.

### **The Relationship between Coach and Client**

Coaching is a service oriented approach to development for which the quality of the relationship between coach and client can be critical (Gray, 2011). According to Edelstein and Armstrong's (1993) research, Wasylyshyn's (2003) research, and reinforced by opinions from other anecdotal authors (Nesbit, 2012; Marshall, 2011, Starr, 2011; De Haan, 2008; Whitmore, 2003), coaching requires a



supportive relationship between the coach and recipient. Palmer and Whybrow (2008) observe that the foundations of modern day coaching psychology have evolved from the Humanistic movement of the 1960s. The humanistic approach, focusing on interpersonal relationships, can be seen as a crucial element to many different types of coaching 'where the coach facilitates a client-centred goal-orientated process' (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008: 4).

Unlike counselling, the role of the coach is not used to explore what has necessarily contributed to the situation in the past, it is focusing on goal attainment (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). Coaching is described as results or performance driven, accomplished through action; counselling tends to be problem or crisis focused after diagnosis, analysis or healing (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008). The coach provides an environment where the client feels at ease and can discuss events without feeling that the coach will judge them for their thoughts or actions. The 2011 Ridler Report found that 'person chemistry' in the relationship between the coach and client was, 'by a significant margin, the highest rated characteristic which sponsors seek in an external coach' (The Ridler Report, 2013: 4).

Witherspoon and White (1996) explain that in their experience the coach's role is as a partner, rather than a teacher, who introduces the client to new challenges, options and behaviours. Pak Tee Ng (2012) and Passmore (2013) recognise that the investment required to develop the relationship into a partnership is the most constructive investment. The relationship may last from a few months to a couple of years although the latter is more likely to be for clients who are in more senior positions (Witherspoon and White, 1996; Bozer and Sarros, 2012). The ICF (2013) reported that coaching is becoming increasingly available to all grades of management although in some organisations it is still only the senior level managers who are coached. The Ridler Report (2013) also recognises the attraction of investing in coaching with senior leaders; as a stand-alone intervention and also valued as complementary to senior leadership development programmes.

Hall *et al.* (1999) outline how current literature suggests coaching is mostly a fairly short-term activity aimed at improving specific managerial competencies. Koonce (1994) also holds this view but provides no empirical evidence to support it; just other practitioners' opinions. Koonce (1994) does provide a four stage process for coaching concluding with a final follow-up monitoring and consulting phase, which complements the argument of coaching being an end-to-end rather than an on-going or continuous process. Hall *et al.*, (1999) consider that when the process is longer a coach becomes a 'personal trainer or therapist', the cost outweighs the value and the process becomes ineffective (41). They conclude that coaching should not be an annuity, as this seems to imply that coaching is used more as a mentoring process, which could conceivably have a longer-term shelf-life. If coaching is about delivering the recipient to a destination then this rather implies that coaching does have an expiry date for each purpose:

“A coach is not a life-long mentor. Ending is important so that closure is reached and action is taken” (In-house coach in Hall *et al.*, 1999: 41).

Discussions and expectations over the duration of a coaching intervention are typically encouraged at the contracting stage with the client and often the sponsor (Passmore, 2013; Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010).

If coaching is about learning rather than being taught, as Dunlop (2006) and Altman (2007) hold then this would support the argument that coaching should have a defined period; for example, once the changed behaviour has been accepted and adopted the coaching may finish. In contrast, mentoring relies on the exchange of experience for the junior person to benefit from. Such exchanges can continue as long as experiences are being formed or exist, thereby continuing infinitely or until the experiences cease having learning value for the mentee.

It seems reasonable that in general circumstances, the coaching experience is for a limited period; whether the period is for a couple of months or for a year or so. As coaching is about moving the client from one place to another, it is reasonable that at some point this journey will reach its destination. Due to the nature of mentoring being to promote knowledge and experience transfer, it could

be argued that this exercise could continue for a longer undefined period as the mentor continues to gain experience that could be relevant to transfer to the mentee and is therefore a continuous process.

The relationship or 'chemistry' between the client and the coach is critical (The Ridler Report, 2013; Nezaki, 2012). The research undertaken by Wasylyshyn (2003) demonstrated that the top personal characteristic required to be an effective coach is the ability to form a strong connection with the client. If the coach is someone the client knows well, they may already have trust and therefore a relationship that is conducive to coaching. If the coach is unknown to the client they will need to build a relationship before the client feels he can trust the coach and subsequently explore some of the more personal areas and thoughts involved. Creating a sense of partnership between the coach and client is crucial to achieving the successful exploration of self and providing support and shared courage, according to Kilburg (2004).

An important service provided by the coach is the value they offer as a confidant and sounding board (The Ridler Report, 2013; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Du Toit, 2007; Snyder, 1995). Sperry's (2008) description of executive consultation includes this important function as a sounding board but also as an expert advisor. Sperry (2008) precedes his point by suggesting that many practitioners who describe themselves as coaches may well be identified more accurately as providing executive consultation, rather than executive coaching; although few would promote the role of a coach as an expert or an advisor.

This partnership arrangement between coach and client should develop trust and safety to allow creative and exploratory discussion without punitive consequences. The coach is more a catalyst who facilitates the process of self-discovery and sense making (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011). Snyder (1995), Kilburg (2004) and Wasylyshyn (2003) all refrain from exploring how that noteworthy relationship of trust is fundamentally built and developed but it is recognised that 'chemistry' or rapport is a critical element (The Ridler Report, 2013; Nezaki, 2012; Passmore, 2013). Primarily the strength of the relationship depends on initial credibility of the coach, originating either from a professional

track record or testimonial (The Ridler Report, 2013; ICF, 2013). The Ridler Report found that although an impressive track record was important initially when matching the coach and client it was less important once the coaching started:

However, sponsors rated the coach's business experience (15%) and the coach's suggestions deriving from their prior career (13%) as the least important qualities they look for once a coach is working in their organisation (The Ridler Report, 2013: 5).

Berglas (2002) and Marshall (2011) also recognise that often the need for a coach is for someone who will listen to the client's fears and act as the sounding board. Berglas (2002) suggests that coaches should focus on people rather than on the problems, and suggests that as a minimum all clients should initially receive a psychological evaluation to screen out those who are not psychologically prepared or predisposed to benefit from the coaching process. Presumably this screening would have to be delivered by a psychologist and this raises the question of how practical and realistic it would be in the workplace to ask clients to complete the assessment prior to some personal development. It raises a further question that if the screening demonstrated that a client was not predisposed to benefit from the process, does that detriment them because they don't then receive the development.

Shuit (2005) agrees with the comments of Evered and Selman (1989) that a coach is important, and likens business talent to that of world-class athletes:

World class athletes wouldn't consider going out without a coach.  
World class business talent is the same way (Shuit, 2005: 2).

This suggests though that only recognised business talent should have access to coaching, whereas in sport even the amateur player can make use of the services and expertise of a good coach. Performance in the sport arena would be immensely disadvantaged if coaches were only available to the elite athletes. Coaching in the early developmental stages of sport is now recognised as vital to nurture potential for later years. Business coaching at early or pre- management stages should also be accessible.

Evered and Selman (1989) believed that there is value in studying the relationship in which sports coaches also offer a supportive and committed partnership, which empowers the client to exceed prior levels of performance. Browne (2006) concludes from her research that a supportive, non-judgemental and trusting relationship is beneficial in coaching. Shuit (2005), Evered and Selman (1989) and Whitmore (2003) all advocate that no one can be coached in the absence of a demand for it. The relationship therefore must be a partnership rather than one based on a superiority. This neutral partnership does not reflect the coaching relationship if done by a line manager (St John-Brooks, 2014).

It seems that Du Toit (2007), Shuit (2005) and Evered and Selman (1989) all advocate coaching to be done by a coach who is perceived as objective, neutral and essentially not in the direct management line to the client. The coach has a committed partnership with the client to not only empower them but to exceed previous levels of accomplishment. Evered and Selman (1989) argue that coaching creates a new context for management, one that fosters a genuine partnership between clients and employers so that both can accomplish more than currently can be imagined or is being performed.

Self-belief is important in achieving goals in coaching, says Altman (2007), who believes that it is the coach's role to ensure that self-belief is strong. Altman recalls Whitmore's (2003) referencing of Tim Gallwey who claims that the role of the coach is to help a player to reduce or remove an internal obstacle to their performance. It is the personal reflective learning process that is the essence of coaching. This reflection that coaching offers in examining how particular situations are managed, what available resources are used and discussing how things might have been done differently, is what provides the usefulness. Coaching involves a skilful balance of challenge by the coach; to encourage the client to reflect on the situation and question how they dealt with it, but to avoid the client becoming defensive and cautious:

The coach can decide at each moment to build on and reinforce the coachee's (perceived) strengths, or else to bring up and help to overcome the coachee's (perceived) weaknesses. This enables the coach to influence the *construction* or *deconstruction* of the conversation, by deciding to *support* or *challenge* the coachee more (De Haan, 2008: 14).

According to Whitmore (2003) 'defensiveness reduces awareness' (30). The latter may damage the fragile nature of the relationship between the coach and the client, as the client feels judged by him- or herself resulting in over-protectiveness. This over-protectiveness may consequently diminish the concept of innovative resolution or improvement by the client, which in turn creates a counterproductive relationship.

The partnership relationship between the client and coach has to ensure that the client feels safe and supported to challenge and explore beyond compliance or what is right and expected (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011; Browne, 2006; Whitmore, 2003):

If there was only the right way to do something, Fosbury would never have flopped and Bjorn Borg would never have won Wimbledon (Whitmore, 2003: 34).

A coach who recognises that the client's internal obstacles are more daunting than the external ones may provide the client with nourishment, encouragement and the light to reach towards (Whitmore, 2003). The coach's role is to promote self-awareness in the client; knowing what is happening around you. The coach should also recognise that good coaching may take the client beyond the limitations of the coach's own knowledge or expertise in a specific area or skill so it's important that the coaches recognise their own limitations. Snyder (1995), in Kilburg (2004), also advocates humility in the coach, supporting Whitmore's (2003) argument that the client is typically the expert in a coaching engagement, rather than the coach being the expert. This theory can be applied to sports coaching, especially at world class level. In world class sport a coach strives to develop the player to perform to the highest level and is not limited to the playing standard of the coach.

Speaking anecdotally, Anderson (2005) argues that a productive relationship between coach and client evolves according to a four-phase pattern and that the monetary impact that coaching has on the business increases as the coaching relationship progresses. The four phases that Anderson (2005) describes consist of:

- Client finds focus in what must be addressed (in the workplace)
- Client focuses on relationships (team or peer relationships)
- Client create alignment between intentions and actions
- Client takes bold and original actions to make positive change

There is an indication, but no details, that some research has been done by Dr. Anderson as he continues to explain that 70% of all monetary value produced by coaching comes from those clients who work in the latter two stages. Clients in all four phases of their coaching relationship produce monetary value which evolves as the relationship evolves, but Anderson (2005) believes it is in the last two phases that the intentions and actions are aligned, and that bold and original action is taken to make positive change. This seems a logical conclusion since it is only in these phases that any action is taken and change actually implemented. Again, little detail is given on how to develop the relationship; only that it is important.

Anderson (2005) writes that less than half of the coaching relationships progress into these latter stages. Despite these seemingly logical claims, no empirical evidence is presented in this article either by Anderson or by other associated researchers to support Anderson's opinions. Anderson is described in the article as 'a leading authority on the business impact of executive coaching' (2005: 10) and has been recognised in the United States of America as the 2003 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Return on Investment (ROI) Practitioner of the Year (S.I.O.P., 2009).

Du Toit (2007) recognises that one of the attractions of the coaching process is the rare opportunity to discuss situations, think out loud, and receive constructive feedback and an impartial perspective on events:

As an objective outsider and “talking partner”, a coach is free to question the executive on major issues, an option less open to corporate insiders (Witherspoon and White, 1996: 14).

Being objective enables the discussion to progress without preconceived assumptions but can have the added disadvantage of not appreciating the intricate details of the culture or organisation. The Ridler Report (2013) also recognised this in their findings when observing that 85% of senior clients prefer external coaches to internal coaches. Internal coaches are recognised for the depth of ‘understanding of their organisation’s business context and political environment’ (8), but:

76% agreed that external coaching is a safer space than internal coaching for senior executives to discuss sensitive personal or organisational issues (The Ridler Report, 2013:8).

It is also important to consider that the potential of the client is not limited by the beliefs or the skillset of the coach. The coach should remain supportive and objective, challenging yet mindful not to influence the limitations of the client. Whitmore (2003) agrees when he suggests that, if done well, the effectiveness of coaching will depend in large amount on the coach’s belief of the client:

He must think of his people in terms of their potential, not their performance (Whitmore, 2003: 13).

The coach, independent to the department and possibly even the organisation, may face a difficult challenge, recognising potential in someone who they have not seen in practice or daily routine, yet are still expected to believe in. This will demand a lot from their skills of perception, judgement and open-mindedness.

The argument as to whether a line manager is best placed to be coach for a client is an interesting one due to their relationship. One perspective is that the responsibility of the manager is to develop and therefore the skill of coaching should be part of their management repertoire. However, if the role of the coach is to provide a neutral and objective perspective, this may be more difficult for a manager whose priorities are on achieving results consequential to the client’s performance. Matthews (2010) also acknowledges that it can be much harder for



a line manager who struggles with the power play due to the senior position they are in to the client. St John-Brooks (2014) provides clear guidelines about internal coaching,

- clients should not be from the same functional domain (to avoid overlapping of mentoring with coaching);
- the coaches should not have clients working under them directly (to avoid boss-subordinate relationship); and
- clients should be known as high performers and not going to retire within the next ten years (St John-Brooks, 2014: 195).

The latter point is a little harsh and the CIPD (2013) Annual Survey Report agrees in restricting coaching to those who show high potential. If those who are ten years from retirement should not receive coaching, is this the same for any development intervention? If so, should they not be retired immediately since further investment in them seems to contradict this point? Furthermore, should those who might obtain their next position in another organisation (within the next ten years) also not receive coaching?!

As the position of the line manager is generally one who holds an authoritative position or 'paternal status' (Beardwell, Holden and Claydon, 2004: 431) to the client it can be more difficult for them to provide a detached and objective perspective. Once the coach starts to convey their preference to a particular direction, it can have limiting or even destructive implications on the commitment of the client on the action transfer, the final phase of Anderson's (2005) four-phase pattern. The client is more likely to be engaged and motivated to implement an action that they feel responsible for and wish to see through to a successful outcome, rather than one that is imposed or mostly influenced by the coach. Whitmore (2003) supports this sentiment:

Perhaps even more common, however, is simply the wish to consult a fresh mind, someone who brings no investment or position of his own, an outsider who is not involved with the organization or its culture. An independent coach can reflect ideas, evoke solutions and support their implementation in a way that few insiders could ever do (Whitmore, 2003: 3).

Whitmore (2003) argues that the coach should be objective and neutral. However, finding a line manager who can approach an issue disinterestedly with

an open mind is quite a challenge. Coaching can also be a timely process when compared to other management styles. Matthews explores why managers struggle to implement this 'time consuming and long winded process' (2010: 2), more frequently dropped in favour of the preferred instructional management style. He agrees with Whitmore (2003), however, that being over directed causes people being coached not to take responsibility. Coaching is supposed to encourage self-dependency rather than manager-dependency.

On the subject of style, Parsloe and Leedham (2009) distinguish between 'purists and the pragmatists' when they write that a coach needs 'considerable flexibility to choose an appropriate style of intervention to suit the context in which the conversations take place' (11). They suggest the style of coaching might vary on a spectrum from a non-directive to a highly directive style, or even a combination of styles depending on the conversation. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2010) identify four styles of coaching, which could simply be described as 'tell, show, suggest and stimulate' (5); the latter behaving similar to a mentor. They too, view style to be a flexible approach; frequently changing between several development areas (i.e. mentoring, coaching, counselling) or dimensions. For the purposes of this study, style is therefore considered to be the manner or approach a coach conducts the conversation with the client. This might be a flexible combination or blend of styles or approaches, such as mentoring, instruction and /or coaching.

The relationship between the coach and client is critical to the success of the intervention (Du Toit, 2007; Passmore, 2007). Although many aspects such as credibility and chemistry contribute toward a suitable match for the client, the relationship needs to be one akin to a partnership, such that the coach can challenge the client's assumptions yet remain supportive and non-judgemental (Browne, 2006), demonstrating integrity and confidentiality with sensitive material. The challenge remains as to whether the coach is best found from within or from outside the organisation but this might be determined by practical matters such as the client's preference and budget restrictions. Although coaching undertaken within organisations has been recognised for its therapeutic value and providing a place for the client to reflect without implication, it is largely recognised as not being therapy but rather as a development intervention. The

duration period of the intervention can be undefined but usually has a definite end focus or destination.

There are some clear elements which form a basis of a professional relationship, including trust, rapport, 'chemistry' and acting in partnership to achieve objectives. Building the client's self-belief and allowing time for reflection will also develop the client's confidence and level of commitment in the coaching engagement.

### **Engaging the Client**

The interpersonal relationship between coach and client is critical to encouraging the client to take action and be accountable for the progress throughout the coaching experience. Providing a non-judgemental, supportive and safe environment will encourage the client to engage in the discussion and take ownership of the actions agreed in the sessions. The client needs to be accountable for the actions beyond the coaching session, to impact positively on performance and realise the benefits that coaching can provide. Coaching focuses on changing behaviours and should therefore focus on those behaviours which will have an impact on improving performance (Levenson, 2009).

The quality of the feedback process in coaching is paramount (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008) and although 360 degree tools are not exclusive instruments for providing feedback they are popular amongst some coaches and organisations. In the CIPD Learning and Development Annual Survey (2008) 27% of all the respondents who used coaching reported that 360 degree feedback was used to link coaching with the overall learning and development strategy. Using 360 degree feedback with coaching was positioned 4<sup>th</sup>, by contrast with the use of coaching as a stand-alone intervention which was positioned 7<sup>th</sup>. An annual survey of Executive Coaching by Sherpa Coaching reported that 360 degree assessments were still the most popular assessments used, with a 25% market share of all the assessments reported. The closest rivals to the 360 degree assessment tool each had a 'market share at or near 15%: DISC, Meyers-Briggs, Emotional Intelligence, and Strengths Finder' (Sherpa Coaching, 2013: 31).

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) define the 360° feedback tool as:

360 degree feedback (or appraisal) involves appraisal by those above, below, and to the side of the appraisee and incorporates self-assessment (Chartered Management Institute, 2010).

This feedback is often positioned at the beginning of the coaching intervention (Passmore, 2010; Koonce, 2010; Grant *et al.*, 2009) to raise clients' awareness of particular aspects and help them further develop. There are a number of versions of 360° instruments available, depending on the focus of feedback and development required. Although 360 degree (360°) instruments have been popular with some coaches, 'increasingly coaches are looking for more granular, personal, and contextual feedback' than that which traditional 360° assessments provide (Koonce, 2010: 26). Accordingly, Koonce (2010) continues, employers are looking for a more powerful approach that can probe specific situations and settings to give feedback in a specific context.

Feedback is an important resource for coaches (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010). 360 degree feedback can provide the missing information to 'fill in some gaps' for the coach (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010:156), especially those coaches who do not have the luxury of seeing the client in daily routine. 360 degree assessment tools have often been used by practising coaches (Grant *et al.*, 2009; Ludeman and Erlandson, 2004; Wasylyshyn, 2003; Thach and Heinselman, 1999; Snyder, 1995; Koonce, 1994; Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993) to provide objective feedback and identify areas to focus the development coaching on.

The administering coach usually determines the number of people to be questioned. The client and sponsor will identify who these will be. In some cases this might include the client's spouse and any children over 10 years old, according to Snyder (1995). The 360° assessment tool is popular in coaching to use as a benchmark for the softer and less tangible targets. Wasylyshyn (2003) and Thach and Heinselman (1999) complement the use of 360 assessment tools with multiple assessment instruments designed to measure psychological references in how people perceive the world and make decisions, such as Firo B

and Myers-Briggs. These tools require psychological training to administer, regulated by the British Psychological Society.

Koonce (1994) conducted confidential fact-finding interviews with the client's colleagues, line manager, and subordinates when he used 360° feedback. Similarly the coaching process that Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) developed enabled colleagues to express feedback about the impact of the client's behaviour without editing comments or telling the client what they think the client wants to hear. Edelstein and Armstrong's (1993) process put the responsibility and control in the participating client's hands. They argued that the narrative feedback from the 360° assessment has a very personal, immediate impact on the client. They continue that, it's difficult for a client to ignore feedback from twelve or so of his colleagues and therefore takes ownership.

Ludeman and Erlandson (2004) explain how they use the 360° appraisal instrument to provide powerful observations and get the attention of the person receiving coaching. They use the data to provide what they class as 'undeniable proof' about the behaviour of the client (63). The data can undoubtedly be very powerful coming from peers and influential work colleagues, but is still subjective views with little or no supporting context (Passmore, 2010). Information from sources where corporate politics can be very influential, almost manipulative can challenge the credibility of such information. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2010) also caution the coach to be wary of 'the different purposes for which this data is collected' (156).

An alternative view is that the advantage of using multiple respondents in a 360° tool is that the subjective views that buck the general trend in the report are more noticeable and therefore raise doubt to the credibility of that concept attributed to the client (Ludeman and Erlandson, 2004). Koonce (1994) agrees that the tools provide a useful insight into the client:

The goal is to get a multifaceted sense of how the person relates to others. “We call this a 360-degree assessment,” says Harrison. “It gives us a wealth of clues about how a person interacts with peers, superiors, and subordinates. What we learn in these interviews gives us not only a very full picture of the person we’re coaching, but also a lot of good, contextual information about the environment he or she works in” (Koonce, 1994: 38).

Koonce (1994) cites Ray Harrison, executive vice-president of a human resource consulting firm that has handled hundreds of executive coaching cases. He suggests that such data serves as indications within a particular context rather than an indisputable declaration. However, without appropriate training in how to deliver the feedback constructively there is the potential to do emotional and psychological harm to the client (Kilburg, 2004; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Wasylyshyn (2003) also advocates the use of 360 tools claiming that most coaches provide some form of 360° feedback and agrees that senior clients like data about themselves. There is little reference to further substantiate this within the article:

The best way to capture the alpha male’s attention is with data – copious, credible, consistent data. That’s why we always get 360-degree feedback on our clients (Ludeman and Erlandson, 2004: 63).

In her survey, of 106 people who had received coaching from her between 1985 and 2001, Wasylyshyn (2003) explored the various coaching tools she used and found that coaching sessions and 360° feedback were rated the top two preferences, scoring 9.2 and 9 out of 10 respectively (n=87). Wasylyshyn describes the third rated ‘tool’ as the relationship with the coach (8.3). This description of the relationship as a coaching ‘tool’ might be perceived as a manipulative or calculating description since many coaches regard investing time in developing a trusting relationship as fundamental to their success.

Wasylyshyn (2003) questions the dependence on efficient and well-established published assessment tools which are often administered and scored electronically; preferring face-to-face or telephonic interviews to gain rich behavioural examples of the client. She argues that the appropriate portfolio of

psychometrics can provide suitable reliable and efficient information. This provides additional support for her argument that psychologists are best placed as coaches since ethical principles and psychometric testing form an important part of their associated training.

Although there is something in Wasylyshyn's argument supporting psychologists as coaches, those not fully trained as professional psychologists but experienced in business could equally provide effective coaching, especially if their business training included some basic psychology or psychometric training. Coaches who develop skills sets in appropriate levels of psychology and business acumen would provide a balanced approach for those receiving coaching.

Thach and Heinselman (1999) also suggest the use of 'multiple assessment instruments', naming several examples including 360° assessments. They advocate this data collection tool to supplement the interviews undertaken by the coach in the initial data collection and analysis phase. Little detail is given regarding the construction or measurement of the tools but Snyder (1995) recognises the popularity and confidence that many practitioners have in them for providing constructive feedback:

In order to correct this kind of behavior, the current rage in executive coaching circles is "360 Assessments," in which every important person from the executive's past and present are interviewed in depth (Snyder, 1995: 31).

Snyder (1995) suggests caution about the use of the tools which can potentially have a detrimental impact if not administered correctly. This applies when using feedback for hard hitting purposes, as perscribed by Ludeman and Erlandson (2004):

Sometimes executives can be jolted even before the questioning begins.... Hence the "360" approach is not for everyone (Snyder, 1995: 32).

Snyder (1995) also suggests care be exercised against raising issues and having no mechanism or process, like coaching, to subsequently deal with them.

The assessment tools offer an opportunity for increasing self-awareness and providing information on perceived behaviour that can have a significant impact if changed. Although coaching can be conducted without the use of an assessment tool (Passmore, 2010) to benchmark performance or identify areas of weaknesses, the tool provides a useful platform on which to develop a relationship with the coach. Illustrating the data provided by the tool into graphs and charts can serve as a useful hook to engage a reluctant client into the process. Ludeman and Erlandson (2004) found this to be true in their polemical article 'Coaching The Alpha Male'.

The feedback should be delivered to the client in a supportive, challenging and constructive manner emphasising self-efficacy rather than as a weapon or tactic to encourage defensiveness or 'wallowing in hurt' (Passmore, 2010; 221). The quality of the feedback process is critical to the client taking ownership and facilitating change. Palmer and Whybrow (2008) outline four standards which good feedback should meet in order to achieve success:

1. Accuracy: feedback is delivered in a jargon-free manner ensuring the client understands it.
2. Rapport: feedback is given in a non-judgemental, objective-style and helpful manner so the client can develop useful insights.
3. Ownership: clients should have the opportunity to discuss their results and take ownership for their development.
4. Utility: feedback and results should be put into a practical, real-world context.

It is important that the client is able to take ownership of the results and not become defensive if progress and change is to follow. Ambiguous or misleading feedback, or information presented in a negative light might not encourage the client to pursue this approach.

360° assessment tools are used in many management and leadership circles. Their usage is also unregulated and administrators don't necessarily have to be trained or qualified to administer or even create them. The assessment tool is



suitable for identifying areas of weaknesses and strengths but without on-going coaching or other appropriate development, the assessment tool will only identify areas, not necessarily provide ways to modify behaviour.

The administration of 360° tools can be undertaken without psychological training. Consequently any negative feedback could have a detrimental impact on the recipient, compounded by the possible incompetence of the person presenting it, if they have received little or no relevant training. Using 360° feedback tools can provide insightful information to enable the client to develop. There are a number of instruments which can provide this information but 360° tend to still be favoured amongst some coaches and organisations. It is important to remember why the instruments have been used and present the feedback in a manner that will encourage the client to take ownership and progress or improve their development and make suitable changes. It is anticipated that these changes will have a positive impact on performance both of the individual and the organisation.

### **Impact and Outputs of Coaching**

Although little empirical work has been done on the effectiveness and benefits of coaching (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008) and the implementation of actions agreed through coaching sessions, goal setting and action transfer has been demonstrated to enhance perceived self-efficacy (Smither, 2011; Gregory *et al.*, 2011; Perkins, 2009; Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons and Kavanagh, 2007; Sofo, 2007). Increased confidence is another benefit for clients. The study conducted by Fischer and Beimers (2009) found that the clients displayed personal growth primarily by increased confidence in their roles. Although supported statistically, it does only draw on a small number of coach matches (5 coaches and 9 clients) observed over just 2 months. Most clients showed improvements in the area of leadership skills and confidence, management skills, and relationship with staff. Perkins (2009) also found specific improvements in leadership effectiveness as a result of coaching. Here the population was almost entirely (95%) male, well-educated senior managers.

Coaching is an action-oriented process and therefore effective as a learning and development approach to encourage the transfer of learning into the workplace. Olivero, Bane and Kopleman (1997) conclude their article on research studying the effects of coaching in a public sector municipal agency, demonstrating the importance and benefits coaching can bring:

Executive coaching is an important way of ensuring that knowledge acquired during training actually emerges as skills that are applied at work (Olivero *et al.*, 1997: 467).

Olivero *et al.*, (1997) estimated that productivity was significantly greater as a result of the coaching, than through delivery of the management development programme alone. These results should be treated with caution as they are largely focused on participants' perceptions of personal satisfaction ratings (Gray *et al.*, 2011).

Altman (2007) writes that those who would benefit most from coaching are likely to be the young, ambitious professionals with good technical skills, and who would benefit from that 'final polish' (28) and knowledge of the organisation, although it is also likely that the older, skilled technical, ambitious professionals would also gain. Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) felt that insight alone was not sufficient to facilitate change in a client's behaviour. Practice, in real situations, over a long period of time, will endure the learning and make much more of a difference:

We have found that even small changes, if consistently maintained, can produce enormous changes in an executive's interpersonal effectiveness (Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993: 60).

Coaching promotes action implementation and learning transfer by consistently maintaining accountability for the client. Accountability is the first step that many clients falter on in their development, but that coaching can help address. Griffiths and Campbell (2009) describes coaching as a process to extend, consolidate and deepen learning by 'holding clients accountable and by clients taking action' (21). Blakey and Day (2013) expect coaches to hold 'themselves accountable to the integrity of their approach' and for the actions they have agreed to take (171).

Hutchins and Burke (2007) and Simons (2004) in Vermeulen and Admiraal (2009) refer to the implementation of learning into the workplace as bridging the transfer gap; it is the missing link between the learning in the training setting to the application of actions in the work environment. Rossett (2007) demonstrated that a small percentage of training professionals evaluated the impact that training had on workplace performance and even fewer practitioners sought any form of evidence to demonstrate that development was having an impact, despite the amount of money invested into it each year.

Velada *et al.* (2007) report that only a small proportion of training experiences transfer from the development arena into work, and that much of the money invested into such activities is never fully realised. Machles (2002) and Wexley and Baldwin (1986) also agree with the estimate:

...It has been estimated that only about 10 per cent of all training experiences are transferred from the training environment to the job (Baldwin and Ford, 1988 in Velada *et al.*, 2007: 283).

Information presented in classroom is usually a combination of knowledge and skill learning. Coaching is about removing barriers and putting the skills into practice; implementing what the client already knows. This may be the reason that coaching yields a proposed return of five times the investment (McGovern, Lindemann, Vergara, Murphy, Barker and Warrenfeltz, 2001) as opposed to just 10% of that in training.

Applying action consistently over a period of time is the subsequent step, which will lead to the referred changes. Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) also advocate using coaches to support the changes back in the workplace. This activity supports Anderson's (2005) final phase of taking bold and original action:

Half of changing is getting people to notice and changing their expectations (Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993: 62).

When evaluating the effectiveness of the coaching process, Edelstein and Armstrong (1993) found that participants expressed that meeting every two

weeks was optimal; they had enough time to practice their goals without forgetting the key learning. Research undertaken by Bozer and Sarros (2012) studied a series of 10-12 coaching sessions delivered on a weekly basis, and research by Kombarakaran *et al.* (2008) observed twelve sessions over a six month period, acknowledging that this regularity is similar to coaching adopted by many organisations.

To be motivated, the clients needed to be exposed to information and feedback that says whether the behaviour is having the desired impact. Without being willing to change though, little ground will be made. The client 'must believe that something important is at stake' (Edelstein and Armstrong, 1993: 66). In her account of coaching four leaders, Nezaki (2012) agrees that the client's 'readiness' to be coached, more so than the quality of the coaching, leads to success:

People have to be ready to be coached; ready, perhaps, to reflect on themselves even if this can be a critical experience. If there is no reflection, there is no awareness and, therefore, there is no behavioural change taking place (Nezaki, 2012: 69).

Organisations invest a large amount in the development of their employees, not only to up-skill them and increase their knowledge but also to coach them to improve performance. Patrick (1992) in Axtell, Maitlis and Yearta's (1997) article points out that:

Much of the training conducted within organisations fails to transfer to the work setting (Patrick, 1992 in Axtell *et al.*, 1997: 201).

Patrick refers to money spent on training; the question could also be extended to include money spent on coaching and its impact or 'return on investment'. It is reported that coaching specifically can yield a significant tangible return on investment; as much as 5.45 times its investment (McGovern *et al.*, 2001) although it is acknowledged that this research involves participants' estimations (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Passmore and Gibbes, 2007).

A pilot project undertaken with a North American manufacturing facility demonstrated that a 4:1 return on investment (ROI) was expected, reports Atkinson (2012), although no further details on the findings are given in the article. Most people within organisations, who make decisions about coaching, find terms such as 'return on investment' (ROI) in relation to coaching difficult to define and in a recent survey none of them had attempted to attribute a ROI value on coaching (ICF, 2013). The CIPD also reported that only 20% of respondents to a survey conducted any kind of evaluation on coaching (CIPD, 2012). Others may agree that coaching does deliver large ROI benefits but fall short of actually measuring them:

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Intangible results such as self-awareness, job performance, self-efficacy, goal achievement, new behaviours, increased motivation, engagement and confidence are also reported to come through coaching (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Gregory *et al.*, 2011; Fischer and Beimers, 2009; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Altman, 2007).

Coaching is reported to be one of the most effective learning and development practices (CIPD, 2013; CIPD, 2011), which is possibly why around 80% of organisations use internal coaching and this is expected to rise (St John-Brooks, 2014). Research into the impact that coaching is having on the business is now

starting to emerge with tangible results (CIPD, 2012; Gregory *et al.*, 2011; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Gerald Olivero led empirical studies of 31 managers who underwent a conventional managerial training programme, followed by eight weeks of one-on-one coaching. Olivero *et al.*'s (1997) study found that training increased productivity by 22%, measured by a knowledge inventory, but when coaching was also involved productivity was increased by 88%. Coaching can be an effective means of improving business results whilst also contributing to development. There were weaknesses in the study but it is regarded as an important milestone in coaching research (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Much of the information available in articles however, tends to be anecdotal or based on experience rather than gained through research. Research is starting to emerge but it is clear that it has some way to go and could take 'another ten years of detailed studies' (CIPD, 2012) to establish a sound evidence-base.

The research undertaken by McGovern *et al.* (2001) calculated the ROI as part of their studies, establishing that 84% of participants identified the quality of the relationship between client and coach as crucial to the success of the coaching:

When calculated conservatively, ROI (for the 43 participants who estimated it) averaged nearly \$100,000 or 5.7 times the initial investment in coaching (McGovern *et al.*, 2001: 7).

The calculations were based on 43 of the original 100 participants, larger than Olivero *et al.*'s (1997) population, but were dependant on subjective estimations of the business impact, and their own confidence levels in their estimates.

Fischer and Beimers (2009) and Kilburg (2004) report that little empirical research has been done on coaching interventions with senior clients except, as Kilburg (2004) argues, by graduates without much experience. It seems acceptable that the return on coaching is positive and often quite substantial. Anderson (2005) claims that coaching can return 700% on investment although he fails to describe how he has reached this staggering figure. Olivero *et al.*'s (1997) research found that training increased productivity by 22% but when coaching was also involved

productivity was increased by 88%, as previously mentioned. Gladis (2007) also refers to the work of Olivero *et al.* (1997) when he supports the view that coaching improves productivity.

Not all outcomes are tangible. Hall *et al.* (1999) also conducted research into coaching, finding that coaching can be an effective means of improving business results whilst also contributing to development. Kilburg (2004) cites Kampa and White (2002) who summarise the only five known empirical studies produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s, by acknowledging that coaching may positively impact individual productivity at the most senior levels:

They stated that “the studies reviewed do provide evidence that executive coaching may positively impact individual productivity at the most senior levels, and that this increased productivity is potentially leverageable for the increased productivity of the entire organization” and “that coaching results in increased learning, increased self-awareness and development, and more effective leadership” (Kampa and White, 2002 in Kilburg, 2004: 203).

Much of evidence-based research on coaching has been case study and narrative or commentary research, however, the evidence base is still regarded as weak (CIPD, 2012). Although it may be possible to draw some parallels with research from psychology based research (Gray, 2011; Smither, 2011) Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) report that only seven impact studies on coaching have been published in the psychological literature. Coaching lends itself to qualitatively based research (CIPD, 2007) and although indications are that coaching draws positive benefits and noteworthy impact, Smither states that the evidence to support these claims seem ‘scant or premature at best’ (Smither, 2011: 137). Results and conclusions drawn from studies conducted by professional bodies (e.g. CIPD, EMCC, ICF) may experience bias as respondents may not be considered objective. Subscribers responding to such surveys have a vested interest in promoting the effectiveness of interventions in which they practice professionally or are associated with.

Evaluating the impact that coaching has on the client and ultimately on the business is critical. The measurement need not be quantitative but should demonstrate that value has been added by the coaching intervention. The coach

and the line manager should be satisfied that the coaching has been a valuable experience for the client and has also impacted positively on the business. Part of the process of building a reliable and credible evidence base is determining the metrics to be used to evaluate success. These could include business metrics such as financial data, turnover, revenue, earnings, profit, sales and customer retention, which could all be used to some degree to measure, gauge and evaluate the impact of coaching (CIPD, 2012).

There seems to be a large amount of evidence to support the conclusion that coaching can have a positive impact on performance. Much of the evidence is anecdotal and more research is invited which focuses on tangible business measures to provide robust evidence. Coaching centres on changing behaviours to have an impact on performance. The difficulty remains in finding metrics that will reliably measure the extent of impact that such behaviours can have on performance in this context. As interest and curiosity in coaching grows more empirical research provides evidence that supports the anecdotal evidence provided by practitioners.

## **Summary**

The literature surveyed establishes that coaching is an unregulated industry into which companies invest huge amounts of time and money with little evidence-based measurement of the impact on productivity or return on investment. Littered with people professing to be coaches, confusion propagates over the terms and expressions that are often used interchangeably with coaching, such as mentoring and counselling. Concern over uprooting deeper psychological complications remains deep within the trained psychologists (Kilburg, 2004; Wasylyshyn, 2003). This fraternity remain cautious of the mainstream coaching community, with clients now preferring coaches to have graduated in psychology training as well as credible business experience (Smither, 2008).

It is widely acknowledged, though still proportionately anecdotally, that coaching is an effective means of improving business results and increasing personal self-knowledge, new perspectives and greater adaptability. There is a growing



demand for evidence based research (CIPD, 2012; Smither, 2011; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Griffiths and Campbell, 2009) into many aspects of coaching; how the client experiences coaching and their learning (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Gregory *et al.*, 2011; Scriffignano, 2011; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Perkins, 2009), and what outcomes are established (Bozer and Sarros, 2012).

Practitioners report that coaching provides clients with an opportunity to feel better, have constructive dialogue with the coach, use the coach as a sounding board or sanity check and have time for reflection (Nezaki, 2012; Nesbit, 2012; Atkinson, 2011; Marshall, 2011; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2010; Browne *et al.*, 2008). Clients refer to this intervention as therapy and researchers refer to its therapeutic value (Passmore, 2013; Blakey and Day, 2013; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Gray, 2011; Parsloe and Leedham, 2009; Smither, 2008). Some would regard these references as derogatory and some, inaccurate.

The relationship between coach and the recipient is a delicate but potentially powerful one which can have a substantial influence and consequent impact on the outcomes and benefits of coaching; irrespective of whether this is positive or negative. It is with this in mind that the concern over the lack of unregulated practice occurs, allowing untrained and inexperienced *cowboys* the opportunity to infiltrate an aspiring profession (Gray, 2011); risking a legacy of centuries and the reputation that competent specialists have built over the last couple of decades within business.

Questions still remain. If the coaching industry is to become regulated would the advantages to both client and coach provide sufficient value to compensate for the effort involved in achieving regulation? Would regulation reduce the amount of ill-trained practice in reality or just provide a badge for large egos and drive unregulated practice underground, creating a 'black market' of coaching with a widened scope of standards? Would the advantages of achieving 'profession' status provide significantly more benefits to both client and practicing coach or in becoming a profession would coaches then see fit to raise their fees to recover

the amount required to pay for professional standards of training, thereby making coaching an elitist practice for those who have sufficient budget?

If coaching is misunderstood by decision makers and business leaders, efforts should be focused on educating them about what coaching is; discussing realistic expectations and recognising the impact coaching can have on performance and development. It is anticipated that, as the evidence-base research on coaching increases, so will the understanding of this approach.

A number of issues have been outlined in this review of literature. These include the evolving discipline and lack of understanding of coaching by business leaders and consumers of coaching services; how to measure the impact and success of coaching when applied within organisations by non-specialist employees, and the unregulated industry which enables anyone to provide coaching services irrespective of their background and qualifications. These issues are examined through the study which looks at whether regulation is needed in the area of Internal Coaching and whether, in this one case, it reflects the conclusions of the literature.

## The Methodology

### Background

The aim of the research was to establish if internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. In this study, business outcomes were recognised as either qualitative or quantitative business measures or observations in behaviours that contributed towards a change in performance. Five learning and development professionals (the coaches) coached clients within a multi-media organisation between 2009 and 2011.

The learning and development professionals were full time employees within the organisation. Their remit was to provide learning and development services to all functions across the regional management. This could include classroom based training or development of another nature. There was a training portfolio of management courses available to the management teams although courses and development interventions could be developed by a learning and development professional if there was a requirement to do so from the business. All training and development interventions were generally presented by the learning and development professional. A quarterly schedule of courses was published by each learning and development professional to meet demand across individual regions. Electronic-based courses were also available and the learning and development professionals designed, wrote, recorded and developed these according to requirements. Each learning and development professional reported to the General Manager, who had a National remit and had primary responsibility for the 'employee affairs' or personnel and employment welfare within the organisation.

The *Coaching Programme* was initially introduced in the North of the Midlands Region by a learning and development professional, who was also the Researcher in the study. It quickly became very popular and word of the intervention spread rapidly. The 4 learning and development professionals were approached by operational directors who wanted to implement it across the other regions. The learning and development managers were keen to add the

intervention to their schedule and learn new skills. The General Manager was also eager to adopt a programme that had such a positive response and encouraged the learning and development professionals to include it in the schedule. He organised and authorised the two days of training for the team.

The training for the *Coaching Programme* was delivered by an external company who was experienced in coaching provision. The two days of training given to the learning and development professionals included learning the administration process for the 360<sup>0</sup> feedback instrument and the *Coaching Programme*, some basic coaching training and some skills practice. The GROW model was used as to structure the sessions by the coach during the skills practice. The 360<sup>0</sup> feedback instrument provided some initial information for the clients to build on during the sessions. The duration of the Coaching Programme (including the collation of feedback) was approximately 9 months per client, with 6 coaching sessions scheduled approximately every 3 weeks.

The research included gathering 12 narrative accounts by coaches and clients describing their experiences during the coaching sessions. NVivo software program was used to identify key activities in the narratives. A subsequent survey questionnaire was designed on the activities that were elicited from the narrative stage. 135 clients were invited to complete the questionnaire on Survey Monkey.

A benchmark question was used to determine how well the client perceived the objectives of the coaching sessions had been met. Of the 80 completed responses to the survey, 65 participants responded to this (n=65). Other data is also regarded as importance and is supported by qualitative (narrative comments and open question responses) and quantitative (percentage of respondents, n=80) information.

## **Hypotheses**

A null hypothesis is a hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between the variables under study, a state that Salkind (2011) calls equilibrium. This is contrary to research hypotheses which are 'statements of actual expected relationships between variables' (Polit and Beck, 2006: 123). In this research the

null hypothesis states that internal coaching had not contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. The research hypothesis states that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.

***H0:** Internal coaching had not contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.*

***H1:** Internal coaching has contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.*

The findings presented to test the research hypothesis include the data from all participants that completed the survey, and specifically completed the qualitative question rating how well they achieved the objectives set (n=65). Eighty respondents completed the questionnaire, but only 65 of them answered this question. Although subjective, the question about achieving objectives provided a quantitative benchmark of success from which further analysis was undertaken. However, other quantitative and qualitative information was also considered when measuring the effectiveness of the coaching sessions.

## **Case Study**

The *Coaching Programme* was rather a unique situation in that the programme was designed and developed specifically for a business need. That is not to say that coaching interventions supported by 360<sup>0</sup> feedback instruments have not been used before but in this case the 360<sup>0</sup> instrument was specifically designed for the audience and the series of coaching sessions were tailored to the business; it was not an off-the-shelf product. The study did not focus on a smaller sample of a larger population within the organisation, or across multiple organisations. In this situation the intervention was a case that was 'studied in its own right, not as a sample from a population' (Robson, 1999: 5).

Polit and Beck define a case study as:

...A research method involving a thorough, in-depth analysis of an individual, group, institution, or other social unit (Polit and Beck, 2006: 496).

The study of the *Coaching Programme* analysed the programme, rather than analysing the group or social unit. Polit and Beck (2006) ask, what is centre stage? The study observed the programme so the programme was centre stage; the processes and outputs rather than the behaviours of specific people undertaking the coaching. Robson (1999) however, sees a case study more about an investigation of a phenomenon within a real context. This description might be considered more closely related to the study conducted:

A case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 1999: 5).

Burns (2000) also describes a case study as simply observing something single and specific like an individual, or more complex and abstract. The latter, he advises should be a 'bounded system' (460); in other words, an entity in itself. This latter description is a more appropriate fit for the *Coaching Programme*, being a bounded system or entity.

### **Benefits and Limitations of Case studies as a research methodology**

'Case study research is not new' (Burns, 2000: 459) but has not always been regarded as a serious strategy. In the past techniques used by prominent psychologists (e.g. Piaget and Freud) during case study research has attracted some criticism. Mintzberg (1973) also challenged the validity of case studies believing that managers are poor estimators of their own activities and there is no evidence to suggest that they can translate the complex reality observed during the case study into meaningful abstractions and theories (Gill and Johnson, 1997). The terminology 'case study research' has more recently been used as a catch-all category or loosely as a synonym for ethnography, participant observation, naturalistic inquiry and fieldwork (Burns, 2000). It is however, a flexible and interactive method of inquiry into 'one entity' in the real world context and, as mentioned earlier, observes a 'whole' case rather than a sample of a population.

Multiple sources of evidence can also be gathered; providing both qualitative and quantitative data. Silverman (2000) points out that case study research is often chosen because it allows access to certain situations or because the researcher has access to a situation. Case studies can involve insider-researchers who might be regarded as a specialist in research and methodology but this might suggest that the researcher isn't as objective (Polit and Beck, 2006; Robson, 1999) as an external researcher. Another problem experienced is that case study research can generate a large amount of information in a brief period so the researcher can easily become swamped (Gill and Johnson, 1997).

The biggest criticism of case studies is around the generalizability (Polit and Beck, 2006; Gill and Johnson, 1997; Robson, 1999). Firstly, there is a question over the value of observing a single event as it is more difficult to cross-check information but Polit and Beck (2006) write that case studies can often play a critical role in challenging generalisations that have been formed using other types of research. When major solutions to a problem in one single case are formed and generalised, the solutions may need to be replicated and tested under a variety of conditions to ensure a reasonable degree of confidence before the solution can really be considered generalizable from one setting to another (Hersen and Barlow, 1976 in Gill and Johnson, 1997). This may be true of the study in this organisation as no two organisations will be identical so although some principles may be transferred one should be careful when assuming generalisations.

Denscombe (2002) acknowledges that it might also depend on how similar the situations are for generalisation to be acceptable. If they are considered very similar, generalisation may be appropriate. Bassey (1981) chooses to use the term 'relatability' over 'generalizability', stating that the important criterion is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate in a similar situation to relate the decision making in one case to that described in the case study (Bassey, 1981 in bell, 2009). This indicates that the theories postulated from a case study can be applied at the discretion of the decision-makers in a different situation, based on whether they accept the similarity of details from the case study to their situation.

Silverman (2000) explains that for those researchers who see the value in qualitative research and descriptive data the question is not around generalizability but rather one of *interest*. He cites Stake (1994) who refers to the 'intrinsic case study' where the case study is of value because of its *interesting* observations, rather than its value being in whether the theories can be generalised (Silverman, 2000). There are some similarities with this and Burns' (2000) view. Burns recognises the value of a case study in its own right as a unique case. This may be the best source of description of a unique situation or case seen as 'inherently interesting in its own right' (461).

### **My role in the research process**

My role in the research process was a learning and development professional, coach and insider-researcher. I was employed by the organisation as one of the two learning and development professional in the Midlands region. I had designed and developed the *Coaching Programme* following a conversation with a business director regarding a business need, and had rolled out the programme in the north of the region before doing so across the whole Midlands region. At this point the second learning and development professional, who was based in the Midlands region, was just returning from maternity leave. She assumed her responsibilities in the north and continued to coach on the programme.

My qualifications and training as a coach had given me a suitable grounding to develop the programme to fit the business need. I was an experienced coach, having coached a number of clients prior to being employed in this organisation. As the principle researcher for this study of the *Coaching Programme* in the multi-media organisation I had access to the programme. I was granted consent by the organisation to undertake the study as part of the Doctorate of Education.

The following diagram (Figure 1) represents the research method used at each stage of the study. It shows who was involved in the study and what data was collected for each part of the study.



## Diagrammatical representation of research methods, Number of coaches involved and the data collected

**Figure 1:** Research methods, number of coaches and clients involved and data collected.

Pilot Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 Coach (Insider-researcher), 2 clients</li><li>• 4 Narratives (Qualitative)</li></ul>
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4 coaches, 6 Clients</li><li>• 12 Narratives (Qualitative)</li></ul>
Pilot Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 participants</li><li>• (Qualitative and Quantitative)</li></ul>
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 80 clients</li><li>• (Qualitative and Quantitative)</li></ul>

I was the coach involved in the pilot narrative and also the researcher for the study. The 20 participants involved in the pilot study had received coaching and were employed by the organisation but were not part of the *Coaching Programme*, so have not been referred to as clients.

### Sampling

The two phases of research meant that there were two opportunities to draw a sample of the population. In research, a sample is taken to ensure that the data retrieved is representative of a population; although it is also acknowledged that no sample can guarantee total representation (Fisher, 2007). Convenience sampling is regarded as the most commonly used sampling method in qualitative research due to the convenient accessibility and proximity of the participants to the researcher. It is relatively easy to carry out convenience sampling with few rules governing how the sample should be collected but it is also the weakest and

least satisfactory method (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008; Polit and Beck, 2006; Robson, 1999) and subject to many biases. It has been described as the 'cheap and dirty' (Robson, 1999: 141) way of doing a sample and is not regarded as representative because the participants are not chosen from random and those participants involved in the convenience sample might be atypical of the population (Polit and Beck, 2008; Robson, 1999).

According to Burns (2000):

The concept of sampling involves taking a portion of the population, making observations on this smaller group and then generalising the findings to the large population (Burns, 2000: 82).

However, generalising from convenience sampling is cautioned against (Polit and Beck, 2008). Concern over generalising from case studies was mentioned earlier and, preference was indicated over relatability or observing specific interesting points rather than generalising theories formed.

There were only 5 coaches involved in the Coaching Programme and one of these coaches was the researcher. It was important that as many of the coaches as possible were involved in the narrative stage of the study. The research-coach participated in the narrative pilot so that the results of the actual narrative would not be biased by involving a contribution by the researcher-coach. This left 4 coaches to complete the narrative stage of the study.

Each coach was asked to invite 2 clients to write narratives. As the coach would also write a narrative for each of the client sessions, each coach was to write 2 narratives; one for each client invited. This totalled 16 narratives that could be potentially received for the study.

A small number of narratives were sought because the focus was on the intense and in-depth description, rather than multiple accounts which are used to confirm hypotheses or find trends. Small numbers, usually up to 15, tend to be suggested (Willig, 2010; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008) as appropriate for qualitative research of this nature. This is generally due to the 'time-consuming

and labour intensive nature of qualitative data collection and analysis' (Willig, 2010: 17).

The survey pilot sample size represented approximately 15% of the total population who had been on the Coaching Programme. None of the questionnaire pilot participants were included in the main research. Including them would alert them to the questions included in the questionnaire and subsequently could potentially skew the results if they then researched the answers to questions, such as definitions, before completing the actual questionnaire. All participants were employees of the organisation as it was felt that obtaining perspectives from the same context and environment would be beneficial to the construct of the questionnaire. Subsequently, the wording of a small number of questions used in the pilot was amended for clarity before being used in the main survey dependant on the quality of the response and whether the question prompted the relevant information from the respondent.

Choosing a coherent representative sample is difficult to achieve. Matching demographic makeup to the overall population will require detailed analysis and can be dependent on the amount of time available. Additionally, researchers are reliant on the helpfulness and generosity of the participants who give their time and effectively manage the investigative distractions to fulfil the request to participate within the deadline provided. Due to this it is sometimes difficult to achieve a true sample, especially if the sample population is also involved in the main research as well. Asking participants to complete questionnaires that distract from their operational duties can be fruitless, especially when little benefit is seen for the participant. In these circumstances, the researcher may have to accept opportunity samples; reliant on those who are available and willing at the time. During this research, the organisation was experiencing a substantial wave of redundancies. This meant asking people to participate and adhere to deadlines despite some of them facing redundancies or increased workloads due to colleagues being made redundant.

## **Stage 1- Written Narratives**

The narrative method of inquiry is used so that the client and internal coach could describe their experiences and highlight the elements which contributed to achieving the business outcomes:

Narrative is characterised by the richness with which it synthesises diverse perspectives... It blends complex data into easily comprehensible-meaning (Vogel, 2012: 10).

Because the nature of coaching is highly relational and contextual, coaching lends itself to qualitative based research (CIPD, 2007). A large proportion of articles on coaching rely on case studies and vignettes as sources of evidence (Smither, 2011). Vogel (2012) describes all coaching as a narrative process and Reissner and Du Toit (2011) also recognise the interactive nature of narrative in coaching but clarify that 'narrative is a larger frame of meaning, in which multiple stories are tied up' (257). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explain that people tell stories of their lives and researchers describe what they produce as narratives. They continue, that the researcher determines the starting and stopping points of the narrative.

In the research in the media organisation, the participants were asked to describe a coaching session; the start and end of the narration were therefore defined by the start and close of the session. The participants were asked to write about a time or 'temporally' about their experience, recounting their thoughts, behaviours and conversations from the session (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 157). However, accordingly the contemplation or reflections of that session cannot be classed as temporal (nontemporal) since the act of contemplation is in the present even though the event is historical. Vogel (2012) writes that narrative inquiry does have a temporal aspect, as it arranges events in time.

The accounts requested in this research did not necessarily abide by the description of narratives provided by Elliot (2009):

Narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and/or people's experience of it (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997 in Elliot, 2009: 3).

The narratives did not consistently have a clear sequential order. The request to participants was to describe their emotions, concerns and structure of the session rather than a chronological account of the session; although there was a connect as each narrator wrote about the session in a meaningful way, and insights were provided into the activities and behaviours throughout the sessions. This is more akin to the description from Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who write that experiences aren't just fragments about the here and now but part of a continuum, embedded in part of a larger, wider narrative. Humans are narrative beings, writes Vogel (2012). He believes that the mind acts in a continuous state of narration as it attempts to make meaning out of experience.

Narratives are time relevant; what is happening in the time that the narrative is being created has an impact on the way the narrative is developed and therefore represented by the narrator. In the narratives prepared as part of this research, events were described from the session but interpretation and explanation of them was relevant at the time of writing, as part of the reflection of developing the account. Bold (2012) identifies with this process of developing narratives, saying that narratives have a past, present and a potential future, 'while other approaches to research want things to 'be' without time being relevant' (19).

A letter (Appendix 1) was sent to participants asking them to describe in detail a coaching session they had been involved in. The coach and the person being coached were asked to describe the same session although it was not prescribed which session. Neither participant saw the account provided by the other person. The narrators were encouraged to include information pertaining to their emotions, concerns, structure of the session, comments about how motivated they felt to implement actions, agreements or challenges made in the session. Supporting notes were also encouraged for submission if it was thought these would support the account, but the description of the account and views on the

session should be their own, rather than conferring with the other person who was in the coaching session.

A pilot was conducted prior to the narrative stage of the research to test the request for information. The purpose of the pilot was to check that the letter received by the participants positioned the request appropriately. In the narrative pilot this mainly involved the clients' perceptions as the coach who participated in the pilot was the researcher and therefore would already understand what was requested. The purpose of the pilot was also to recognise how long it would take to write a narrative; appreciate what would be involved when writing the narrative; and establish an expectation of what kinds of information would be included, i.e. would it give the type of information that would provide insight into what happened in the sessions and how people had reacted during the experience.

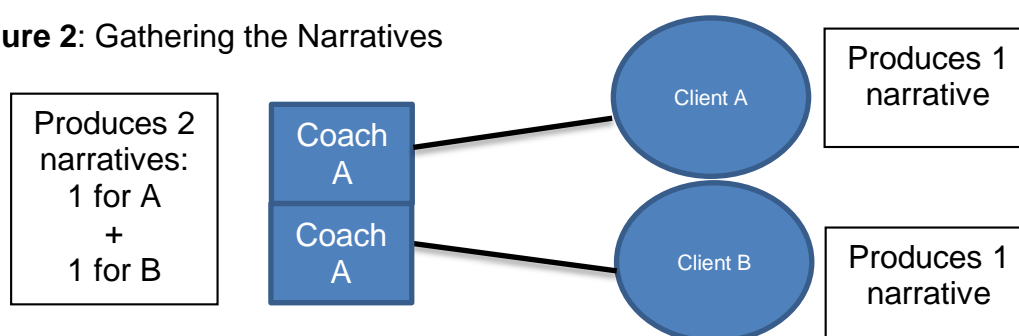
The pilot was completed by the most experienced and trained coach; the researcher. As mentioned earlier, by participating in the pilot, the researcher-coach would be able to obtain the information required from the pilot yet abstain from the main narrative research to reduce the bias of data collected from this stage. Two people who had received coaching from this coach were also randomly selected to participate. They had recently completed the Coaching Programme; one was a junior learning and development manager and the other a middle manager within the business.

The participants were required to provide a written narrative describing their experience of a coaching session received. The pilot narrative request elicited sufficient and relevant information required so few improvements were made to the main research as a result; the wording was amended for clarification and the time given to the participants to produce the narrative was extended from five days to fourteen.

The four remaining coaches were asked to provide a written descriptive narrative of a coaching session conducted within the last 12 months. It was not specified which of the series of six coaching sessions to focus on. This was decided between the coach and the client. The four coaches were asked to provide

narratives of one session for two different clients. Eight clients were also asked to respond to the narrative request, resulting in a total of 12 participants and potentially 16 narratives (2 from each of the coaches). Figure 2 below illustrates this. Coach A invites two clients to write narratives and Coach A writes one narrative for each of the corresponding session with the client, i.e. two in total. Four narratives are received; 2 from Coach A and one each from the client. This is repeated for all four coaches and their respective clients; potentially totalling 16 narratives.

**Figure 2:** Gathering the Narratives



$(2 + 1 + 1 = 4 \text{ narratives}) \times 4 \text{ coaches} = 16 \text{ narratives in total}$

4 coaches, each have 2 clients so  $4 \times 2 = 8$   
 Total of 8 **narratives from the coaches.**  
 8 clients (4 coaches x 2 clients) so  $8 \times 1 = 8$   
 Total of 8 **narratives from the clients.**  
 $8 + 8 = 16$   
**Total** narratives requested = 16.

Additional materials supplementing the narratives (e.g. action plans, personal objectives, coaching notes) were accepted if the participants felt that these would complement the narratives. Suggestions included personal journals, notes taken by either party during coaching session and client's evaluations of the coaching programme.

One client (Participant 2) provided supporting notes summarising his or her key objectives derived from the 360<sup>0</sup> feedback tool. One coach (Participant 3) provided summary notes from a client's recent operational meeting to demonstrate evidence of action taken following the coaching session. These supplementary documents were sent with the narratives as appendices.

Although the individual versions of the same session might not be described identically, it should not be assumed that the accounts are false. The information in the narrative is a re-construction or representation, written after the real event. It should not be deemed inaccurate just because the two versions may differ in content; equally neither should be seen as the absolute truth.

Narrative research was chosen for the first stage of the research because it enabled a deeper insight of what people had experienced in coaching, how they had interacted, how they had made sense of their experience and how that then manifested into action. Bryman and Bell (2007) cite Weick (1995) as they argue that narrative analysis can prove extremely helpful in providing a springboard into understanding what Weick has termed 'organizational sensemaking' (Weick, 1995: 452). The narrative stage of this research sought to describe events, activities and perceptions rather than interpret the experiences of those involved. This approach allowed the participants openness to describe what they deemed as important during the session, without bias or judgement from preconceived questions or indications.

Narratives can provide a rich description of human behaviour and may even provide some understanding of the behaviour. Although many practitioners disagree on the origins and ways to conduct analysis, the narrative field has 'realist, postmodern and constructionist strands' (Riessman, 2008: 13). A critical realist considers that all observation is fallible and all theory revisable and is therefore critical of our ability to know reality with any certainty. A constructivist believes we construct our view of the world based on our perceptions and since perception and observation is fallible our personal constructions must be imperfect. This argument of the re-construction of reality supports what Willig (2010), Bold (2012) and Elliott (2009) discuss in the search for reliability of data:

Each person constructs his/her own frameworks according to his/her specific combination of external circumstances and internal factors (Palmer and Whybrow, 2008: 327).



Here Palmer and Whybrow (2008) write that a person reconstructs their reality based on their individual and specific circumstances, which will influence their construction of that reality. Willig (2010) writes that qualitative data collection enables participants to 'challenge the researcher's assumptions' about concepts and themes (16) suggesting that some interpretation is involved. Elliott (2009) describes reliability as the 'replicability... of research findings' (22) also suggesting some interpretation on behalf of the researcher and therefore reconstruction of that particular reality. Bold (2012) endorses this when she states that information is reconstructed in a form different from the original data whilst aiming to reflect its original status or reality. This means that individuals reconstruct information, as close to reality but based on their own perceptions and experiences which will influence their interpretation of the information.

The postmodernist era of qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) as 1990-present (1998), following the modernist or golden age depicted as 1950-1970, and the eras of blurred genres, 1970-1986; and crisis of representation, 1986-1990 (2). Bold (2012) argues that the postmodern approach to research accepts that all interpretation is inevitable, especially in research involving people and their interactions. She continues that:

Professionals enter their research with significant knowledge and understanding about practice, identifying and addressing the need for change through systematic evaluation (Bold, 2012: 144).

Bold (2012) continues that narratives are therefore an obvious choice for professional research, utilising the networks and social relationships that already exist. Andrews *et al.* (2008) write that postmodern approaches can compromise the 'political engagement which many narrative researchers seek' but if narrative research thoroughly engages with postmodernism it won't necessarily be compromised (9). Those who act with awareness of narratives' social positioning and problems of subjectivity can formulate narrative research as a post structural enterprise or an extended version of a postmodern approach.

Narrative arrangements carry many different meanings and formats vary according to practitioners and researcher. A template or structure was not

suggested in this research, as it was felt that it would lead or influence the participant. Therefore the format, length, quality and content of the narrative produced was unique to the participant. Polit and Beck (2006) describe narrative analysis as 'a type of qualitative approach that focuses on the story as the object of inquiry' (504). Narrative is often used synonymously with "story" but could equally include other accounts, either written or graphic, that represents an event. Such examples might include memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, archival documents, social service and health records, folk ballads, photographs and other art work, spoken, written and visual materials. Consequently the analysis of each may require specific but different skill sets and comprehension.

Writing might not be the sole form of narrative presented for analysis; which often requires depth of understanding, to look beyond the immediate text or picture of the narrative:

Good narrative analysis prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of a text, and there is a move toward a broader commentary (Riessman, 2008: 13).

Andrews *et al.*, (2008) agree that narrative research seems to offer no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation; or whether to analyse narratives' particularity or generality.

Riessman (2008) claims narrative study is a cross-disciplinary twentieth century development comprising 'a many layered expression of human thought and imagination' (13). The cross-disciplinary description suggests that the use of a narrative inquiry approach is versatile and adaptable to many fields of research in the twentieth century and beyond. Supporting Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) description of postmodern narrative popularity, Riessman's argument recognises that narrative inquiry has become more popular in recent times but evidence of narrative practice stems back to 300BC. Riessman (2008) explains that Aristotle's (born 384BC) analysis of the Greek tragedy articulated what narrative form is; a representation of events, experiences and emotions, often with moral tales or depicting a rift in the norm.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) were highly influenced by John Dewey, who held the notion that experiences grow from other experiences, which lead to further experiences and subsequent layers of expression. Individuals have a series of unique experiences which will always differ from the next person's series of experiences. As participants complete their narratives, their experiences will have an influence on what they write; what they include and how they internalise, interpret and explain events and occurrences. This is what leads the narratives to be personal and different from a purely factual chronological account of events.

Narrative was largely undetected as a common practice of analysis until recently. Bryman and Bell (2007) agree that narrative analysis and 'biographical methods' (pertaining to people) of investigation have seen a resurgence of interest in recent years. Arguably narrative form has been around for as long as people have told stories, dramatizing events, experiences and emotions for all who might listen:

Narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form (Riessman, 2008: 11).

By providing narrative accounts, the participants were able to complete the requirement at their own convenience and in their own privacy; minimising the effect of what Balls (2009) describes as power differential or role influence, which may have been more prominent if they had been accompanied, or if the conversation had been directed by a researcher. This enabled the respondents to write freely in their own language about what they saw as important about their experiences, without direction from questions or responses from interviewers which may have been perceived by the respondents as judgements when answers were given.

The data provided were original first-hand accounts created by the person involved in the coaching. There was no need to further transpose them. This meant that the accounts were presented as whole entities, as submitted; which contained or reduced the loss of data through translation:

Qualitative data collection methods are designed to minimize data reduction. In qualitative research, the objective of data collection is to create a comprehensive record of participants' words and actions. This means making sure that as little as possible is lost 'in translation' (Willig, 2010: 16).

These written accounts were not exposed to detriment that spoken accounts might be exposed to when being captured and transposed to written word; losing part of the communication (i.e. the body language). Narratives written in this way have the added advantage of time and planning. Participants were given two weeks to complete and submit the narratives; allowing them time to consider and plan their entries and re-write if necessary. It also meant that the participant could reflect on the events providing rich accounts of the sessions.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Once the information for the narratives had been received, the researcher read through them all individually to understand the general context of each account. Common topics or themes were identified across the twelve narratives and software was used to identify the percentage of coverage for each activity within the general theme from all the narratives. The most common activities were used to provide a foundation structure for the questionnaire.

Methods for the analysis of narrative research tend to treat and analyse them as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is often done with other forms of qualitative analysis. Riessman (2008) explains that breaking the narratives into fragmented pieces for analysis would eliminate the 'sequential and structured features that are hallmarks of narratives' (12). Consequently, trying to analyse them beyond the surface, as mentioned earlier, once they had been broken into segments would be much harder to achieve. Andrews *et al.* (2008) discuss the advantages of narrative analysis and how it allows the study of identity, focusing on the local practices through which it is produced in particular times and places.

It is recognised that analysing the narratives by methodically breaking them into fragmented units (words or phrases) would take away the synergy that

accompanies and encapsulates a personal account. Identifying the key activities that underpin the narrative, however, would help to understand what shaped the experience for the person involved and recognise what they interpreted as important or considered significant in achieving the business outcomes. Identifying the activities integrated within the narrative may give an indication of the cognitive processes involved as the narrator reflected and recreated the event in narrative form.

A similar process for analysis is provided by Andrews *et al.* (2008) who state that narrative analysis can be conducted in two waves; the first wave studies the narrative as text; the second is the study of the 'narrative-in-context' (64). This suggests that narrative analysis lends itself to the researcher who understands the context of the research; as in the case with this research in the media industry. Being familiar with the context of the media industry and working environment, the researcher is able to comprehend on the first-hand level what is happening through the exchange of written dialogue between coach and client; identifying any relevant themes and activities. This is also supported by Riessman (2008) who draws attention, when analysing narratives, to the sequences of actions, the overall plot, intention and language; rather than simply the content to which the language or detail refers.

Unlike other category-centred approaches of analysis, narrative cannot easily be distilled into coding units by taking bits and pieces, and making sense of it. Whilst this approach might be applicable to, for example structured interviews, questionnaires and similar surveys, doing this in narrative analysis might disturb the original intention, eliminating sequential and structural features that provide comprehension throughout this specific type of approach (Riessman, 2008: 12).

Narratives are consistent with how we think and construe reality yet within the coaching literature, narrative is not a prominent theme (Vogel, 2012), either as a methodology of coaching or as an inquiry into the intervention. In the narratives produced in this research, analysis was done by reading through the descriptions and identifying common themes or 'issues that are common between several participants' (Balls, 2009: 32). This method was also reported by Vogel (2012)

who interviewed six coaches in his empirical research and Fisher (2007) also supports this approach of drawing out themes from the narratives:

The codes or themes can be identified by either skimming your research material... or by reading the literature (Fisher, 2007: 182).

There were four main themes identified from the narratives written by the participants of the media organisation research for this thesis: coaching style, the process, the experience, and achieving the outcomes. These substantive domains were then further reduced within the themes. The table on page 106 (Figure 3) shows how the initial analysis was drawn from the themes.

This technique was done, not by segmenting the narrative, but through extracting the essence of what had happened and forming a skeletal pattern of events within a process.

Common themes and topics were extracted from the narratives during the analysis process, as explained earlier. These were used to re-construct the coaching experience that had been described by the participants. This was then presented back to all participants as an opportunity to check for accuracy and any biased interpretations or assumptions made by the researcher.

**Figure 3: Themes and Activities**

This diagram shows the main themes and activities that were drawn from the narratives in the analysis.

Main Themes	Key Activities (Identified by researcher using narratives)
Coaching Style	Coaching
	Mentoring
	Counselling
	Instruction
The Process	Achieving Objectives
	Exploring objectives
	Realisation / Eureka moments
	Reflection
	Setting objectives
The Experience	Led by coach
	Led by client
	Negative or positive
	Supportive coach
The Outcomes	Achieving progress
	Tangible outcomes
	Exploring solutions

### NVivo Software Program

The key themes and activities were identified by reading through the narratives and identifying common points described by the authors. These activities were then refined and confirmed using NVivo, a software program developed by QSR International. This program can be used to organise, classify, analyse and report rich text-based and unstructured qualitative information. Developed in 1999, it enables the user to uncover trends and capture observations; detailing analysis and qualitative modelling. This package was used to explore the data more fully and confirm the percentage of script that was written about each of the activities identified. The percentages of each activity are included in Table 5 on page 141 in the Findings chapter.

Using the key activities, the questionnaire was then built to confirm the elements that seemed to be important to the success of the coaching in achieving the business outcomes. As Riessman (2008) suggests, events that are perceived by the narrator as important are selected and written about for the purpose of the narrative.

The use of computer analysis software is limited throughout the overall research. Software analysis has advantages; being able to analyse large quantities and complex data more efficiently than by systematic human means. Information technology software may provide fast and accurate results but can miss the more delicate and elusive aspects that can be identified through careful appreciation of the experience. Bell (2009) describes Glaser's (1992) concern about the use of software to generate theory at the expense of ground work and understanding of the field. Bell (2009) agrees that budgetary restraints and time restrictions push researchers into using software that might overlook the subtle procedures that tease out layers of meaning, concepts, codes and relationships. Some contemporary researchers also recognised the concerns with using software to analyse information:

A decision was made not to use qualitative data analysis software, to avoid becoming 'seduced' by the process of data coding and hence losing some of the nuance of the data (The Ridler Report, 2013: 18).

To this end, the analytical software procedure in this research of coaching in the media organisation was used sparingly.

## **Stage 2- Survey Questionnaires**

When deciding on which tools to employ during the research, some were eliminated as they were not appropriate or only appropriate when certain information had been obtained. Questionnaires would only seek answers for the questions that were asked whereas the narratives would allow participants to provide much more unrestricted, descriptive writing about facts, opinion and emotions without being led in a particular direction, as questionnaires would do.



Using the themes and activities identified in the narratives, a questionnaire comprising forty-one questions was devised (Appendix 2). The questionnaire sought to confirm the salient elements of the process that were starting to emerge in the narratives, whilst providing additional factual and perceived information. The questionnaire would also provide a measure for how effective the coaching had been by asking participants how successful they had rated their coaching and whether they had achieved their business outcomes.

The purpose of the questionnaire used in stage two of the empirical research was to systematically endorse in bulk, specific commonalities and practices from a number of people who had been involved in the Coaching Programme in this organisation. The data from this analysis would provide a general description from across a group of respondents, and deliver empirical support for being developed around achieving the business outcomes.

This was a far larger sample approached than in the previous stage, as the purpose was to confirm generalisations and demonstrate accuracy of themes. With a larger population, it was anticipated that recognised patterns would indicate what was important to participants and what had contributed to successful coaching in this context; verifying hypotheses, evaluating the coaching undertaken, and providing a model for future practice. The quantitative data could be supported by qualitative data and vice versa.

Questionnaires were thus used to confirm the information established from the narrative stage. For example, the narratives written by people who had been coached described coaches using different styles during the sessions, so question 12 asked the respondents to indicate which of the following descriptions best described the style used by the coach throughout the coaching session: coaching, mentoring, instruction, or counselling (Appendix 2).

This item on the questionnaire related directly to the research question about whether the coaching style applied within the session made a difference to obtaining positive results. Respondents were allowed to tick more than one description. This helped to confirm the proportion and breadth of styles used, eliminating styles that were not used. In questions 9-11, respondents were asked

to describe what they understood by the terms coaching, mentoring and counselling. This provided information regarding their understanding and the consistency of definitions.

Since questionnaires were used to confirm information rather than introduce new information, they would only be used in the second stage of the data collection process rather than at the initial stage. Sandelowski (2008) defends the use of qualitative methods of research used independently to quantitative, arguing that supplementing qualitative means with quantitative methods should be done as a complementary step rather than to complete or validate the research. The use of narrative inquiry as the first stage endorses this view; conducted independently from the questionnaires. The qualitative and quantitative data collated from the questionnaires was intended to support the data from the narrative rather than to complete it:

It is as if qualitative research cannot be understood without reference to, or punctuation, by quantitative research that requires no such referent or punctuation (Sandelowski, 2008: 193).

Sandelowski (2008) continues that comparing methods for strengths and weaknesses is a fruitless exercise because strengths and weaknesses only exist 'in relation to specific standards or definitions of *strong* and *weak*' (194). The strength in one method can not offset the weakness in another. Approaches used should be considered in the light of whether they achieve the outcomes of the research. In this research the narratives provided detailed accounts of the clients' experiences. The questionnaires provided additional data, some of which complemented the data by confirming information or providing further detail.

Participants were asked to complete the survey questionnaire on Survey Monkey, accessed via a web link and taking approximately fifteen minutes to complete. Survey Monkey provides survey software to create and publish online surveys and view results graphically and in real time. Most of the questions were quick response tick box answers requiring a reaction to how much the respondent agreed with the statements, broadly describing the effectiveness of the process

and measuring the perceived success of achieving the business outcomes identified by the coach and client in the coaching sessions.

Towards the conclusion of the questionnaire there were two questions that asked for a brief description of respondents' perspectives and understanding of coaching; thereby integrating qualitative and quantitative items within the questionnaire. The questionnaire could only be completed once by participants; whereby on completion the web link expired. Following the narrative stage a research hypothesis was developed. This stated that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.

The survey pilot was administered to 20 participants, who had experience of coaching, either as a coach or client. Participants were selected using the following criteria: they had received coaching as a manager; and they were not part of the specific Coaching Programme within the organisation as this would diminish the population available for the main survey.

The main research questionnaire was administered to all managers who had received coaching through the Coaching Programme and who were still employed within the organisation. Of the 135 managers included in the survey, 80 completed the survey; representing 59% of selected population. The survey, created in Survey Monkey, comprised predominantly of Likert style questions using a scale of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree.

Survey questionnaires offer a number of advantages. They are relatively cost effective and require little time and effort to administer (Polit and Beck, 2006; Trochim and Donnelly, 2008). The questionnaire could be easily built on Survey Monkey and dispersed geographically via email to the recipients. Since all recipients were employees of the organisation, email addresses were easily available through the internal address book.

The questionnaires could be accessed through a web-link that was emailed to the recipient. Trochim and Donnelly (2008) refer to this method as "pulling" the

respondent to a web-site, and argue that it has 'important implications for how the respondent perceives the survey and for response rates' (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008: 119). Pulling the respondent to a web-site based survey meant that the questionnaire could offer complete anonymity, with only the address of the computer being acknowledged in the data. This provided a safer environment for the recipient to complete the questionnaire; encouraging less bias and a more candid response. The absence of an 'interviewer' also encouraged less bias and any power differential; otherwise the respondent might have reacted in a certain way to an interviewer rather than to the questions themselves.

## **Other Considerations of the Research**

### **Reflexivity on being an Internal Researcher**

Reflexivity is important in qualitative research so that the researcher is aware and can limit the effects of bias issues. Bryman (2008) describes reflexivity as:

A term used in research methodology to refer to a reflectiveness among social researchers about the implications of the knowledge of the social world they generate of their methods, values, biases, decisions, and mere presence in the very situations they investigate (Bryman, 2008: 698).

Although Bryman (2008) recognises that the researcher can have an effect or impact on the interpretation or behaviour because of his or her knowledge and presence, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) provide a meaning for reflexivity:

One meaning of reflexivity is that the scientific observer is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he or she is trying to understand and represent (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 285).

As an employee of the organisation it was difficult for the researcher to take a purely objective viewpoint. The research depended on the participants collaboration, especially in the narrative stage. Non-collaboration would have produced qualitative data with much less content and inferior quality. Participation in the research was voluntary and perceived as the contributors giving up cherished time to fulfil the requests made. If participants had felt exploited they would not have given their time and expertise so willingly, and response rates would have reflected this.

In this research, the narrative stage was conducted using accounts from the four learning and development professionals (internal coaches) located across the three regions; and the fifth learning and development professional, who was also the researcher, produced a narrative for the pilot only. It was recognised that as the researcher and coach, asking participants to write about a mutual coaching session may contain a large degree of bias, which could skew the main research findings:

It means that you are aware of how others perceive you and how you perceive them, and involves all the attributes of critical reflection (Bold, 2012: 3).

By participating in the pilot, the experience of writing a narrative could be observed and familiarised without impacting on the main results. This enabled a more informed insight into the procedure and request for information. It also enabled a coach to be included in the narrative pilot without using a valuable coach-resource for the main narrative research. Since there were only five coaches involved in the programme altogether this meant that one could be used in the pilot and the remaining four participate in the main narrative research. One of the advantages recognised by being an 'insider researcher' is that future challenges to the profession may be identified through conducting the research.

The anonymity of the questionnaire enabled the respondents to complete the survey knowing that their identities were covert and the responses they gave would not bear any repercussions in the workplace; this stimulated a more candid response from the clients, and may account for the pleasing response rate from the population. It also meant that respondents who had been coached by the researcher during the programme could complete the questionnaire without being identified as such.

Response rates for this questionnaire were considered very agreeable. 59% of those invited to complete the survey responded, which was regarded as a positive response. Archer's (2008) research calculated the response rates of 84 web-based surveys deployed over 33 months and found that response rates varied depending on the survey type but generally, for Output/Impact Evaluations, 52% of those invited responded. The best response rate category was for Meetings/Conference Evaluations (57%). The 59% rate achieved in this research was favourable in comparison. In an earlier article, Archer (2007) also concludes that his research indicates that web-based surveys are a good method of obtaining data from within an organisation. The following activity, which Archer (2007) also recommended, was deployed in this research to encourage a larger response rate: reminders were sent to increase the response rate. Two reminders

were sent during the survey in addition to the initial invitation and a reminder was sent approximately 65% of the way through the survey window.

Socio-psychological scales were incorporated into the research questionnaire to assign a score or rating on a continuum with respect to opinions and judgements being measured:

Scales permit researchers to efficiently quantify subtle gradations in the strengths or intensity of individual characteristics (Polit and Beck, 2006: 299).

These were designed to quantitatively discriminate amongst the respondents with different attitudes, perceptions, motives and outcomes. The scales used in the questionnaire were Likert scales, originally devised in 1932 'to discover the strength of feeling or attitude towards a given statement or series of statements' (Bell, 2009: 142). The scale used in the questionnaire consisted of 5 statements (items), ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. These are the most straightforward and easiest to manage, according to Bell (2009). The statements within the research questionnaire could then be judged by respondents who would indicate the strength of feeling in their personal experience of the Coaching Programme.

The following quantitative question was used to benchmark the success criteria: *On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very little through to 10 being totally) how much do you feel that you have achieved the objectives set?* This question enabled the respondent to evaluate the coaching experience and provide a quantitative measure of the perceived success of the Coaching Programme; how well they had achieved their objectives during the coaching sessions.

The data collection was undertaken in two phases in a cross-sectional study. This design is often associated with '*quantitative or quantifiable*' research because it entails the collection of data in connection with two or more variables, 'which are then examined to detect patterns of association' (Bryman, 2008: 44). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during this research, at a single point in time. The use of narratives and questionnaires in the two phases implied that the participants needed to interpret the request for information and provide

their perceptions in both the narrative descriptions and the open-ended questions in the survey. The narrative approach and the questionnaire have limitations as they rely on the participants' interpretation and perception of reality, retrospectively. Consequently, the constructs identified from the data rely on the observations of participants and are therefore fallible, subject to memory flaws, and inevitably uncertain.

When inductive reasoning was applied to the data drawn from the narrative stage of the research, it provided the theory presented that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. Inductive reasoning is described as 'the reasoning of specific observations to more general rules' (Polit and Beck, 2006: 501). With qualitative data theory is elicited from the information using inductive reasoning:

... an inductive strategy of linking data and theory is typically associated with a qualitative research approach (Bryman, 2008: 13).

Using this reasoning with the narrative data, the research hypothesis (that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes) was formed and the second stage questionnaire was developed to test the theory.

## **Concepts and Frameworks**

From the narrative research, the activities or concepts identified were those in figure 3 on page 106, based on the percentage of script afforded them in the narratives. Concepts are defined as 'the building blocks of models and theories' (Fisher, 2007: 126), although the concepts were not necessarily defined with any clarity at this stage. Bryman (2008) describes them as:

Each represents a label that we give to elements of the social world that seem to have common features and that strike us as significant (Bryman, 2008: 143).

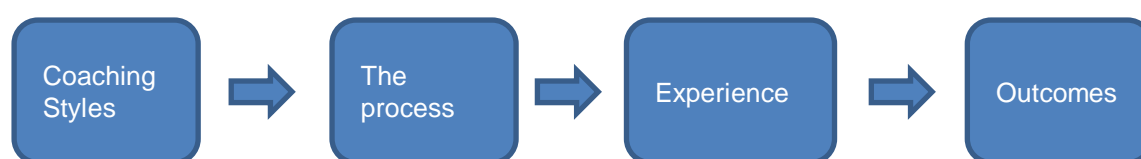
These elements might be described as the activities or components that are common within the coaching sessions. Examples of these were the mentoring and coaching styles, the reflection and 'eureka' or realisation moments that were



described by the participants. These were the 'identification of categories of meaning from the data' (Willig, 2010: 35) which provided the structured framework that started to take shape for the second stage of the research and designing the questionnaire. The themes, or categories of meaning' that were identified in Figure 3 on page 106 were the coaching style, the process, the experience and the outcomes.

The themes were then represented in a framework to help clarify the research issue and the following basic logic model was proposed:

**Figure 4:** Logic Framework for Coaching



Trochim and Donnelly (2008) advocate the use of these representations to 'guide researchers in the process of identifying indicators or measures of the components of the graphic model' (29). Arguably the model may not necessarily guide in the identification of such indicators, but is useful in providing clarity when representing them. The indicators, in this research, are the elements within the boxes, or the activities that fall under each category. For example; within the box labelled coaching styles would be the different styles used in a typical session: coaching, mentoring, instruction and counselling. These indicators or elements are illustrated in the second column on page 106 in Figure 3: Themes and Activities.

Fisher (2007) supports Trochim and Donnelly's (2008) description of the conceptual framework clarifying it below:

In a conceptual framework, you put the concepts together as in a jigsaw puzzle. You work out how all the concepts fit together and relate to one another. The first stage of theorising identifies and clarifies concepts; the second stage concentrates on the connections and relationships between the concepts (Fisher, 2007: 126).

The first phase of theorising in this research in the media industry was done after the narrative stage. Here the activities were identified and thoughts as to how these fitted together in the puzzle started to emerge. In stage two of the research, the aim of the questionnaire survey was to establish what connections or relationships there were between the different themes and activities. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data from both stages, facilitated a theory to be generated and subsequently confirmed or rejected. Theories are ideas about how phenomena relates to each other. Fisher (2007) continues that:

Theories are an attempt to draw generalisable findings from specific instances. That is what the word 'inductive', in this context, means. Seen from another perspective, theories are attempts to explain research findings (Fisher, 2007:133).

The theories that were induced from the narrative data provided the hypothesis about the coaching process. It established that there were elements that related to the success of achieving business outcomes through coaching, and these were confirmed in the second stage of the research.

Leedham (2005) identified similar foundation elements in his article reviewing published literature on the tangible benefits of using external coaches in business coaching. He also uses a case study to identify what factors the key stakeholders perceive to be important in deciding if a coaching relationship is successful. Here, the coaching relationship bridges the boundary of the organisation since the coaches were external to the organisation where the internal clients were based. The relationship developed between coach and client might be perceived a different challenge to that of building a relationship with an internal coach and client. This is not to say it is *more* challenging, but may be perceived a different relationship because of the different pressures and implications of a relationship based outside or inside an organisation, i.e. the objectivity of an external coach or the power struggles of an internal coach. This will be covered in the following section.

Using these factors a 'generic and holistic framework' was developed based on a benefits model that is proposed as relevant to employees responsible for procuring suppliers of coaching. Leedham's model is based around a benefits model relevant to those purchasing coaching. It might therefore, have limited perceived relevance for those who are using internal coaching and aren't explicitly buying coaching; although they are arguably still consuming such a service.

Figure 5 below, shows Leedham's model, adapted to fit his interpretation of the data gathered.

**Figure 5:**

*Content has been removed due to copyright reasons*

Leedham's (2005) initial hypothesis was developed by studying literature and published models, rather than through empirical research. He then conducted a case study approach with a small number of people to identify patterns of themes in the data. This is similar to the narrative stage of the research into the media organisation where a small number of people participated in helping to identify patterns in data. Leedham believes that his model can be applied to other similar situations because of its 'refined, reliable and valid view' based on grounded theory (2005: 31). He does not clarify what factors within two situations need to be similar for the model to be appropriately applied, for example do the coaches need to be external or would the model relate to internal coaches?

The following table (Table 3 on page 120) has been developed to compare some of the elements within Leedham's categories with the elements from the themes and activities in Figure 3 (on page 106) and Figure 4 (the Logic model on page 116). There is nothing similar to compare with Leedham's Coach Attributes so this has been left blank although, knowledge and experience might contribute towards the coach style outlined in the last column. The Outcomes mentioned in the logic framework (Figure 4 on page 116) have also been omitted from Table 3 as, again, there is no comparison.

Leedham does not make mention of the style of coaching, possibly making the assumption that only a coaching style would be used. Listening, questioning, giving clear feedback, establishing rapport and providing support are those aspects listed under Coach Skills, although one might argue that all of those skills would be relevant to using mentoring, coaching and instruction. This might be the closest category to the Coach style featured in the Themes and Activities in Figure 3 on page 106.

In Leedham's Coach Attributes, he includes knowledge, experience, qualifications, being inspirational and having belief in the client's potential. In Process he includes a clear structure and discipline, being mentally challenging and stretching. This might be perceived as similar to the reflection, realisation moments or setting, exploring and achieving objectives listed in The Process theme in Figure 3, Themes and Activities on page 106. Providing a safe, supportive place to discuss confidential and sensitive issues, providing space and time to think and reflect are mentioned in the Environment category. Here there might be overlap with the Process.

**Table 3:** Comparison of Leedham's factors with those outlined in this study

<b>Leedham's Foundation Factors</b>		<b>This Study's Themes and Activities</b>	
<b>Coach Skills</b>	Listening, questioning, giving clear feedback, establishing rapport, providing support	<b>Coaching style</b>	Coaching, mentoring, instruction
<b>Coach Attributes</b>	Knowledge, experience, qualifications, being inspirational, having belief in the client's potential		
<b>Process</b>	Clear structure and discipline, being mentally challenging and stretching.	<b>Process</b>	Realisation moments, reflection, setting objectives, exploring objectives, achieving objectives.
<b>Environment</b>	A safe, supportive place to discuss confidential and sensitive issues, providing time and space to think and reflect	<b>Experience</b>	Led by client, supportive coach,

Although there are differences with the two models there are also some commonalities. It is important to remember that Leedham was focusing on external coaches, where qualifications and experience may be considered with a higher priority. Confidence is also mentioned in Leedham's (2005) Coaching Benefits Pyramid Model, although it is not featured as a Foundation Factor.

### **Power and Subversion of Coaching**

The use of narratives in the initial stage of this research provided a potential medium for participants to express in their own language what they had experienced. It is suggested by Elliott (2009) and supported by Reissner and Du

Toit (2011) that such an exercise can be liberating; providing insights into their own reflections. Elliott continues:

The popularity of narrative approaches among many social scientists may also lie in its potential to be subversive or transformative (Elliott, 2009: 144).

Participants who completed narratives and those who participated in the survey were able to acknowledge and record their own personal success and enjoyment of the experience. Although there is no direct evidence in the data to advocate that the activity was transformational, there is suggestion that confidence was increased via the coaching and participants felt more empowered by expressing themselves through the narrative media. Vogel (2012) believes that asking someone to construct their experiences through narrative allows them to construe their reality and make sense of experiences in an engaging and natural way. He describes this as 'an efficient way to generate rich material that can bring alive a coaching conversation' (Vogel, 2012: 2).

There is suggestion within the narratives of subversive activity which pushes against the power differential within the organisation; accounts of more junior managers feeling empowered and confident to be proactive or 'push back' on their line managers in certain situations. Coaches should be aware of the distortion potential in stories (Reissner and Du Toit, 2011) although not necessarily intended to be misleading by clients. This was not a matter of encouraging clients to be insubordinate, but proactive in stimulating their own development. The following citation from a narrative, demonstrates how one respondent became increasingly confident about her own attributes:

We went back over my styles and I was quite amused that I had stated my positive attributes about myself in a negative and apologetic way. (My coach) asked me how I felt about those attributes now and I said I was proud and highlighted that senior managers in the business had put these down as positive points about me in the recent 360 degree appraisal (Excerpt from Narrative 1).

The political ramifications of using narrative and qualitative responses in the questionnaire approach accentuates the responsibility of the researcher to interpret the narrative produced accurately and as intended contextually by the respondent. This has advantages for the insider-researcher who may understand the culture of an organisation but who should also be conscious the impact of reflexivity on the interpretation of information because of the knowledge and presence within the organisation. The outsider-research, whilst remaining more objective and independent, may not truly appreciate the context and culture of the organisation; and therefore may be susceptible to unintentionally misrepresenting the respondent.

In this research, the researcher was employed by the organisation so; according to Drake and Heath (2011), rarely can the approach be neutral or objective:

In researching one's own workplace one is necessarily positioned by these prevailing political ideologies, as are one's research respondents, colleagues, friends, etc. Thus people's behaviour is driven by political stratagem, and so the research can never be 'clean', 'neutral', 'objective' (Drake and Heath, 2011: 35).

The intention was to recognise the potential influence that the researcher may have had on the participants, especially as a valued colleague, employee and insider-researcher; and acknowledge the impact on respondents when limitation had been sufficiently addressed.

Some researchers may find themselves embroiled in internal politics of an organisation as they become pressured to promote a particular viewpoint, especially if the research is partly funded by the organisation. This however, was not the case during this research. The organisation was almost indifferent to the findings and largely the completion of the research.

## **Evaluation of the chosen Research Methods**

It is important that the findings and the subsequent conclusions are robust. To support this it is essential that the chosen methodology is shown to have a high degree of reliability and validity.

Polit and Beck (2006) describe reliability as 'the degree of consistency or dependability with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to measure' (508) but Elliott (2009) defines the reliability specifically of individual's narratives, as the 'replicability or stability of research findings' (22). The measure of reliability is about the assessment of the quality and accuracy of what it measures; does it measure it consistently and can it produce the same quality of measurement on other occasions with a minimum of errors. Asking participants to produce open narratives without prescribing specifically what information one requires might not produce the same information on different occasions; it will produce narratives of events but details may vary depending on the narrator, mood, memories that have been recently triggered by recent events and even timing.

Bold (2012) also expects that differences and inaccuracies will occur when narratives of an occasion or incident are created by different people due to the elapsed time since the session and differing recall abilities:

The representative constructions are based on information that is about real events. The information is reconstructed or represented in a form different from the original information while aiming to maintain the reality (Bold, 2012: 145).

Narratives produced by corresponding participants describing similar events increased the reliability. This meant that events were described similarly on different occasion by different participants.

Denscombe (2002) defines reliability in simple terms when he challenges, 'if someone else did the research would he or she have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions?' (Denscombe, 2002: 213). Again, one might argue that narratives of the event will be produced but the details of significant



activities within the events might differ. At each stage of this research, pilot surveys were conducted to test the reliability of the approaches and tools used.

By asking the participants to describe the same coaching session, it increased the reliability of the material and provided a degree of triangulation. There were common themes found, and discussions described, in the accounts that supported the narrative from the corresponding participant. When analysing the narratives, it would be evident if a client or a coach described a discussion or incident that was not included by the corresponding participant. This process could effectively increase the reliability of the information included in the narrative.

When a researcher analyses narrative research, the vulnerability of reading beyond the surface of the text, as Riessman (2008) suggests, is that the text is misinterpreted; the analyst unintentionally elaborates on the original meaning. It is therefore important that the narratives demonstrate reliability, and triangulation is used to support the findings made.

By pursuing an eclectic approach complementing a qualitative narrative approach with a further mixed quantitative and qualitative questionnaire, the data provided a more comprehensive and supportive conclusion. One of the advantages of integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods throughout the research is the aspect of reliability. The measurement is considered reliable if it 'yields the same answer on different occasions' (Willig, 2010:16). The qualitative methods deployed enables insights to be expressed, and the quantitative approach means conclusions can be represented proportionately.

Following the narrative stage, conclusions drawn from the analysis were presented to the participants via a PowerPoint presentation. This provided the participants with an opportunity to validate the conclusions and provide their opinion and degree of agreement on the explanation being proposed. The purpose of this was two-fold. Firstly it allowed participants to demonstrate whether they felt that the data had been interpreted accurately and as intended. Participants were able to suggest if they agreed with the conclusions, or if they had felt that assumptions had been made. Secondly, it acknowledged the

contribution of the participants and enabled the knowledge and recommendations to be disseminated in a practical and relevant environment.

Validity is the degree to which the tool measures what it is supposed to be measuring. Bryman and Bell (2007) explain measurement validity as 'whether or not a measure of a concept really measures that concept' (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 165). Sapsford and Jupp (1996) in Bell (2009) define it more precisely as:

...the design of research to provide credible conclusions; whether the evidence which the research offers can bear the weight of the interpretation that is put on it (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996 in Bell, 2009: 117).

By developing the research questionnaire from the themes and activities that were identified in the research narratives and then presenting these back to the narrative respondent immediately after this stage, the validity for the questionnaire increased; it measured what the participants had confirmed from the narrative research.

Bryman (2008) refers to this as construct validity and applies it primarily to quantitative research. He explains that it is to do with 'the question of whether a measure that is devised of a concept really does reflect the concept that it is supposed to be donating' (32). In the research of the *Coaching Programme*, participants agreed that the themes and activities from the narratives were accurate reflections.

The constructs identified from the narrative data rely on the observations of participants and are therefore fallible, subject to memory flaws, and inevitably uncertain. To control this limitation and improve construct validity, the second phase survey, based on themes from the narratives, was conducted to request information from 135 managers across the organisation. All employees who had undertaken the programme and who were still in employment within the organisation were asked to participate. The constructs drawn out from all the narratives were presented to each of the phase one participants for confirmation. This triangulation exercise confirmed the initial key themes, which were subsequently used to develop the second phase survey. For example, it was

identified that a mentoring style was used by the coach in the sessions to complement the coaching style used.

In a study of developmental coaching for high school teachers in Sydney, Grant *et al.*, (2010) use a widely used assessment inventory that measures leadership styles and behaviours. The construct validity of the inventory is described as good 'with a number of empirical studies supporting presence of the three underlying dimensions' (Grant *et al.*, 2010: 158). Similarly, the use of narrative enquiry and survey questionnaires have been used successfully in other empirical studies to establish effective components observed and could therefore also be described as 'good' in this research. The mechanism of both the 360° feedback instrument and survey questionnaire have also been found to have sound construct validity, being evident in a number of empirical coaching studies.

A high degree of validity will demonstrate that the selected method for collecting the data will provide information that will measure what it is intended to measure, and that the conclusions reflect the complexity of the investigation and have not been over simplified nor assumptions been made by the researcher.

It was recognised that the researcher had an influence on the collected data but strived to ensure that biases did not contaminate or taint the research findings; either in the conclusions, nor the assumptions. Findings were presented back to respondents at the end of both the narrative and questionnaire stage to validate the accounts with the participants (Vogel, 2012), and check that outcomes had not been misrepresented. Bryman (2008) calls this 'respondent validation' claiming that it enhances the credibility of the findings.

Another concern of research involving behavioural studies can be method variance, which threatens the validity of conclusions. This is particularly prominent due to the subjective measurement used in the research. Method variance is described as 'the variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the construct of interest' (Bagozzi and Yi, 1991 in Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003: 879) and can potentially provide alternative explanations for observed relationships between different

constructs. Method variance can often manifest itself in response biases such as the halo effect, social desirability or leniency methods. To reduce and control the effects of method variance, data was collected from participants with different roles in the research; the coach and the client. This was to eradicate any tendencies on the part of any participant to submit data in a compassionate manner due to, for example, social desirability or transient mood states.

### **Evaluation of Narratives**

To reduce the impact of bias or one-sided reporting in the narratives, the researcher was not included as a coach participant in the narrative stage of the research, and did not actively select the participants who had received coaching at this stage; this was left to the respective coach participants. Consequently, this reduced the number of available coach-participants who had been involved in the Coaching Programme to four for the main narrative research. The researcher-coach instead, participated in the narrative pilot so that an appreciation of the narrative request could be made. This is mentioned earlier in the thesis.

In order to collect corresponding narratives from a coach and client, the two responses needed to be linked to identify the coach and corresponding client. This could potentially compromise the anonymity of the participants and thereby reduce their willingness to participate. Clients were selected by the coaches and clients sent their narratives directly to the researcher. This allowed clients to respond anonymously by naming their coach rather than themselves and provided reassurance of confidentiality and still enabled triangulation to take place.

'Real-time' coaching sessions were used for the research as it was felt that these would provide genuine examples on which to draw the conclusions, rather than simulating examples and assuming that the sessions would closely represent real sessions. The varied data submitted with the narratives (personal notes, action plans, personal objectives) provided from corresponding client and coaches also provided an element of triangulation; although Denscombe (2002) warns that the use of methodological triangulation does not prove that the data or analysis are

absolutely correct, and that researchers should not presume such things. Seeing things from different perspectives and having the opportunity to corroborate findings merely enhances and bolsters confidence in their validity.

A narrative pilot was undertaken involving the researcher-coach and two clients who had been coached recently by the researcher as part of the Coaching Programme. The benefit of conducting a pilot at each stage during this research was to be able to provide a positive answer to Denscombe's (2002) earlier question of reliability and whether the same conclusions and results would have been reached if someone else had done the research.

The pilot was conducted to enable the researcher to understand what was being asked of the coaches and appreciate the time consumption and detail requested as part of the research. The pilot participants were selected from a similar population group to the main research population group. It provided a 'test run' and enabled the participants to provide feedback on the approach and Narrative Request letter, focusing on appropriateness of language, comprehensiveness, and clarity of request. Considered amendments were then made accordingly.

To ensure that the gathered data was reliable, narratives were collected from twelve coaching participants from within the media organisation and cross-referenced between the coach and the corresponding recipient. Although it may not be appropriate to generalise the findings across other organisations, the process and methods utilised within this research could be applied outside this organisation, and similar findings achieved. Bryman (2008) cites Guba and Lincoln (1994) when he explains how reliability and validity fit into the components of trustworthiness. The four criteria of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2008: 377).

He argues that credibility parallels internal validity; where the respondents confirm that the investigator has correctly understood the context studied. This was applied in the research in the media organisation at the conclusions drawn from the narrative stage. Dependability, Bryman (2008) continues parallels

reliability which is supported by an 'auditing' approach detailing procedures that have been followed (378).

### **Evaluation of Surveys**

In the second stage, the questionnaire survey, all employees who had received coaching via the Coaching Programme were invited to complete the survey. This included people who had received coaching from the researcher as a coach, prior to the research being undertaken.

In the survey, managers from within the organisation who had previously received coaching were asked to complete the survey questions prior to the participants. This demonstrated that the tools would produce consistent information about what was being measured.

An audit trail of collated data was maintained throughout this research to ensure transparency in conclusions drawn. It was also considered that the saved data could provide a useful reference point for cross examining information if conclusions were challenged at any stage during the research process.

### **Limitations of the Approaches Taken**

It was also recognised that the methods used through this research had its limitations. For example, the material presented as data was subjective and based largely on self-perception rather than objective observation or other objective measurements. This was so that the people experiencing the coaching could express their perceptions rather than making assumptions about how they perceived coaching. It was anticipated that the identified limitations were controlled and, where possible minimised, through the combination of materials used (narratives accounts including additional supported materials such as action plans and personal objectives). One limitation recognised in narrative approaches is the often unaddressed contradictions within the descriptions from alternative sources (Andrews *et al.*, 2008). It was felt that exploring narratives from 12 different sources might provide additional perspectives on such

contradictions. An example of this from the narratives is where a client described the style applied as mentoring but the coach refers to it as coaching. These contradictions were challenged through defined items in the survey questionnaire, asking the respondent to describe particular styles and define them.

A key limitation recognised in this research is that the impact on both the workplace and on the person receiving the coaching was recorded using perceived self-report mechanisms rather than through actual objective observation. To balance any bias from the self-report tools, other perspectives were considered to give an alternative viewpoint, as suggested by Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons and Kavanagh (2007). In this case, observations from the coaches were used for triangulation. Velada *et al.* (2007) and Sofo (2007) also used self-report tools and advocate similar measures to increase validity. Polit and Beck (2006) support the use of objective observations to avoid any bias through self-perceptions. Although the bias may not be intentional, it is useful to get an alternative perspective from a person involved in the situation and familiar with the context:

Certain research questions are better suited to observation than to self-report, such as when people cannot adequately describe their own behaviours. This may be the case when people are unaware of their own behaviour (Polit and Beck, 2006: 310).

Sometimes people are not aware of their own behaviour or the impact it has on others around them. In the coaching sessions, the 360 feedback tools provided information on actions and the impact on others. The discussions of such behaviour with the coach often lead to realisation moments.

Since the data was collected from only one organisation the results may not generalise to other organisations, or even across sectors. It was, however, expected that there may be a number of elements that influenced the coaching practice and it would then be possible that some of these may still be relevant in different situations. For example, the effective use of a blended style of coaching, mentoring and possibly instruction, rather than only using a coaching style could be applicable in many situations:

Just because narrative approaches interrogate cases....does not mean results cannot be generalized (Riessman, 2008: 13).

Exercising careful analysis of narrative accounts, thinking beyond the surface of the text, and understanding the context of the research environment may enable the findings to be applied in other situations. Caution will still need to be exercised to ensure that assumptions and biases are not implied. If a coach visits other organisations and is familiar with the sector and context of the environment however, ensuring effective elements such as realisation moments, blended styles of coaching, and providing challenging coaching sessions for clients will support a more successful coaching outcome.

The data collected, analysed and interpreted by the researcher acknowledged the impossibility of total objectivity. Although certain practices were exercised to reduce and control the influence of the researcher, it was acknowledged that total objectivity could not be attained during this research. An example of such a practise to reduce biasness was the participation of the researcher-coach in the pilot narrative rather than the main narrative research.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) describes ethical codes as 'a combination of principles and procedures and often, more problematically, of minimum standards and aspirations' (BERA, 2006: 3). The researcher's responsibility is towards protecting and safe guarding the people whom they are researching, but also to the creation of knowledge. This can give rise to dilemmas where conflicts may arise compromising one or both of these areas. An example might be encouraging a respondent to provide the highest quality of a narrative account with rich detail and content, whilst still protecting all the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

BERA encourages its members to deliberate the ethical guidelines it provides. This approach may encourage members to actively consider their actions around protecting their research participants. Providing a prescribed code, although



promoting a more consistent approach, would not encourage independent thinking and might prove problematic when applying to the wide variety of research projects necessary to create new knowledge. Codes cannot anticipate all possible dilemmas that might arise in every situation and could not provide a comprehensive practical guide for every potential encounter. Accountability for the safeguarding of participants remains primarily with the researcher conducting the research; although arguably the sponsor or grant-funder should take some responsibility with regard to the conduct.

The obligation to set and uphold the highest standards of professionalism was recognised in the research undertaken, supporting and promoting ethical behaviour, attitudes and judgements on the part of practitioners and the researcher whilst being mindful of the need for protection of the employees and participants.

According to the British Psychological Society (BPS), ethics is related to the control of power. They advocate that thinking about ethics should pervade all professional activity. Accordingly:

Ethics can be defined as the science of morals or rules of behaviour. Psychology can be defined as the scientific study of behaviour both internal (for example, cognition and feelings) and external (for example, language and actions). Thus whilst ethics and psychology are distinct, there is nevertheless an overlap as both are concerned with behaviour. Before embarking on professional work the ethical implications should be considered as part of the work context together with legal, professional and other frameworks (BPS, 2009: 5).

Despite there being relatively little discussion of the specific ethical issues that are raised by the use of narrative in research (Elliott, 2009), this research conformed to the examples given by Wasylyshyn (2003), Stern (2004) and Kilburg (2004) by applying the grounding of ethical standards into the coaching practices. Examples of managing ethical standards within coaching behaviours include; respecting confidentiality, managing the assessment tool and other data, and managing the boundaries of relationships.

The research also conformed to the suggestions outlined in the BERA guidelines about providing participants with information about the full nature of the research. The invitations to participate (Appendix 3), which were sent to all respondents, included details of the researcher's name, code of conduct, purpose and context of the research, how to withdraw participation before, during and after the research had been conducted. Participants were given an information booklet on the research including information pertaining to how the research was being conducted, the time frames, name and contact details if they wished to ask more questions about the process or indeed if they wished to withdraw their responses. All participants were asked to read the booklet before signing and returning the consent forms. Participation would not be continued without consent from each respondent.

The researcher recognised and strived for the protection of rights, dignity, safety and privacy of research participants throughout the research. Of paramount concern were the reputation of all stakeholders and the development of quality research, whilst observing and upholding the ethical principles of minimising harm (non-maleficence) and maximising benefits (beneficence), particularly to the research participants. It was intended that the coaches involved as participants would be able to use and implement the recommendations as part of their own development as coaches.

A risk assessment (Appendix 4) was conducted to ensure the protection of participants, weighing up potentially conflicting risks and benefits involved in the research period. There was no wish to detriment the research by compromising any participant under relevant legislation, for example Data Protection, Equal Opportunities, Discrimination (e.g. race, religion, disability, etc.), and Employment Rights. Participants were treated fairly and respectfully; and were not coerced into participation in the research.

Participation in the research was on the basis of informed consent based on the appreciation and understanding of the facts and implications of any outcomes of the research. Adequate records of when, how and from who consent was

obtained, were kept by the researcher. The participants were not intentionally deceived throughout the research.

Debriefing sessions were available for all participants, after the data collection phase of the project when the conclusions were presented back. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and provide their views and opinions on the findings; this also provided a rigorous and robust challenge to the practicality of the findings and subsequent conclusions. Research recommendations were also made available to those who demonstrated an interest, once the data had been analysed. The specification of the project, the roles and responsibilities of the researcher, and the dissemination of the research outputs in terms of the research undertaken and the resulting intellectual property rights were clearly agreed prior to the work being done.

It was the intention of the researcher that the dignity, welfare and safety of the participants were not compromised throughout the research undertaken. Information and data collected was done so with the utmost respect for the confidentiality and privacy of material and individuals. Hard copies of materials or data received from participants was stored in a locked filing cabinet; soft materials received was stored in password-protected files so that any breach of security of theft of laptop and storage facilities would not compromise the identities of participants.

Presentations to a number of forums (BERA annual conference, September 2011; Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Trainers Forum, November 2011; presentation arranged by a local training provider for the continued professional development of internal coaches, December 2011) were given to disseminate the information from the research and promote positive practice within coaching circles. Anonymity of the organisation involved in the research was maintained, as were the identities of all participants. Information received and discussed at such venues has overall been received positively, although awareness is raised and caution exercised over the contentious and sometimes sensitive points that may be raised over practices that exist within the studied organisation. For example, some people have been surprised that professional

learning and development practitioners were encouraged by the organisation to practice coaching with very little specific training and no relevant qualifications.

The purpose of these presentations was to disseminate the information and knowledge gained and was not intended to be judgmental on the practices that exist within organisations. A statement of the rationale behind such practices can provide some explanation but by no means intends to exonerate or condone the decisions taken within an organisation.

Finally, the researcher values the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in her professional work, and the importance of preserving her ability to function optimally within the recognised limits of her knowledge, skills, training and experience. She has committed to remain honest and accurate in representing the practitioner profession and researcher field. These ethical considerations have been integrated into the professional practices of the researcher as an element of continuing professional development.

## **Summary**

Narrative accounts of coaching sessions were produced by four learning and development professionals (the coaches) and from 8 clients. Two participants, one coach and one client, also provided some supporting documentation to evidence what they had described in the accounts. Twelve accounts were submitted by participants.

The most common themes and activities were identified throughout the narrative accounts by initially reading through the accounts and understanding the context and information described within them. Then NVivo software was used to determine the percentage of script that the identified themes and activities occupied. These were then used to structure the survey questionnaire.

135 participants were invited to complete the questionnaire. These comprised people who had experience of the *Coaching Programme* and were still employed within the organisation. A web-link inviting them to complete the 40 questions was

sent via email. Eight questions required open-ended responses and the rest used a quick response tick box answer, using a Likert scale consisting of 5 statements ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

A response rate of 59% of the completed questionnaires was received. Of the 80 responses, 65 people had completed to benchmark question used to determine how well a client perceived the coaching objectives had been met. This data received from the narratives and the survey questionnaires provided both qualitative and quantitative information, as discussed in the next chapter.

The following table (Table 4) summarises the number and role of the participants involved in each stage of the study.

**Table 4:** Description of Participants for each stage of the Study

Stage of Study	Participant	Number of Participants invited to participate	Description of Participant	Number of Participants who participated.
Narrative Pilot	Coach	1	Researcher-coach.	1
	Client	2	Clients of the Researcher-coach.	2
Narrative	Coach	4	Learning and development professionals.	4
	Client	8	Clients of the coaches.	6
Survey Pilot	Clients	20	Clients who had received coaching and were employed within the organisation.	20
Survey	Clients	135	Clients who had participated in the <i>Coaching Programme</i> and were still employed within the organisation.	80

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants were asked about their perceived success. Similar to Olivero *et al.*'s (1997) study of 43 subjective estimations of success, this study involved participants using self-perception rather than objective observations. Consequently there is the potential for response bias and to provide alternative explanations for observed relationships between different constructs. In recognition of this participants who played different roles (i.e. coaches and clients) were asked to participate. Although subjective qualitative information was received, the study also provided a quantitative measure of perceived success from the benchmark question in the survey.

## The Findings

### Research Questions:

- Does the coaching style applied within the coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
- Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching?
- Does internal coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

### Overview of the Study

The research hypothesis seeks to confirm that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. From the data collected it was found that the participants felt the coach was important to the success of the coaching session. There was evidence of positive support for the internal coach being objective, credible, confidential and independent to the department. It was also apparent that the coaching style adopted by the coach during the coaching session was a blended mix of coaching, mentoring and instruction.

There was also an indication that some participating coaches were more effective than others. It was inconclusive whether being trained and qualified provided a more effective positive impact as the qualitative and quantitative data provides some suggestion of success for all coaches, particularly those who had no qualifications or experience in coaching. The findings demonstrated that clients felt they had successfully achieved their objectives set in the coaching; which supported the research question that internal coaching had an impact on business outcomes. It was also established that participants felt that changes in terms of business outcomes could be attributed to the internal coaching. In other words, they felt that performance had changed in a positive manner due to contributable behaviours affected and influenced through the coaching interventions.

This research observed coaching activities of participants undertaking a programme of coaching within a multi-media company, comprising two stages

each proceeded with a pilot. The first was a narrative enquiry using accounts written by coaches and their clients, describing experiences of the same session. Twelve narrative accounts were received; 6 from coaches and 6 from clients. These were studied to identify common themes. NVivo software was used to support the process of extracting the essence of what was reported in the accounts to form a skeletal pattern of events to establish the themes.

Stage two of the research comprised a survey of 41 questions built around the themes that were identified from the 12 narratives. A benchmark question was used in the survey to establish a quantitative measure of success as perceived by the clients.

The 12 written narrative accounts were studied in the first stage of the research. These were collected from 10 participants; 4 coaches and 6 clients. The coaches were asked to produce a separate account for each of their 2 clients. In stage two, 135 participants were asked to complete the survey questionnaire; 59% (n=80) completed the survey. However, not every item in the questionnaire was answered by every respondent. For example, only 65 participants completed the quantitative question on business outcomes measuring the perceived achievement of objectives set. All responses (n=80) to the questionnaire have been considered when calculating the percentages of specific activities included in the questionnaire items, as these were not reliant on the quantitative benchmark question.

The findings demonstrate that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.

### **Narrative Analysis**

The first stage of the research produced twelve narrative accounts by coaches and their clients describing first-hand experiences of the coaching sessions. This number was suggested appropriate by Willig (2010), considering labour and time available for data collection and analysis. No structure was provided as a template for the narratives to avoid stemming or influencing information, although a couple of prompts were provided.

Key activities were primarily identified in the narratives by reading and interpreting the accounts, an analysis method which Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) describe as narrative in context; using the contextual experience of the researcher who understands the context of this research. Vogel (2012) also recognises the concept of context in coaching when he researched the use of narrative coaching. The key themes and activities identified were used to construct the questionnaire survey for the second stage of the research.

The activities, which were primarily identified by reading through the narratives, were refined and confirmed using a qualitative data analysis computer software package, NVivo. This package was designed by QSR International for researchers who use rich text-based information and was used to confirm the percentage of script written about the activities from each participant's narrative. A summary report of the narratives, activities identified and percentage of script for each activity within the narrative is in Appendix 5. QSR International (2012) claim the software is there to support the researcher explore data:

NVivo, our flagship software, helps you manage, analyze and report on unstructured data like interviews, websites, images, videos and social media posts. NVivo doesn't do the thinking for you; its powerful workspace helps you to explore your information, so you can focus on making new discoveries and better decisions (QSR International, 2012).

The following table (Table 5 on page 141) illustrates the total percentages for each activity identified using the software. These activities were initially outlined in Figure 3 (on page 106) from the themes and activities identified in the narratives. The activities in Table 5 (on page 141) are ranked in accordance to the average sum of all the percentages of script across the narratives.

The survey questionnaire was then designed around the key activities identified in the table. The table shows the activities that were identified from the narrative accounts. Specific activities were identified in a number of the twelve narratives, but not all; this is shown as 'Number of Narratives'. For example, the coaching session was perceived to be a 'positive experience' in 11 different accounts and throughout these, is referred to 29 times. The 'sum of all the percentages of script' that a 'positive experience' refers to is stated in the fourth column. The last



column represents the average percentage of script that this activity appears, calculated by taking the sum of all the percentage of script and dividing by the number of narratives it is mentioned in.

**Table 5:** Percentages of Narrative for Activity

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number of Narratives</b>	<b>Number of References to activity</b>	<b>Sum of all %</b>	<b>Average: Sum of % / No. of Narratives</b>
Achieving Progress	9	31	275.32	30.59
Exploring Objectives	10	41	305.16	30.52
Positive Experience	11	29	291.29	26.48
Business Outcomes	5	19	115.79	23.16
Achieving Objectives	9	21	197.54	21.95
Setting Objectives	12	34	223.72	18.64
360 Assessment	10	22	178.89	17.89
Mentoring Style	7	15	109.28	15.61
Coaching Style	6	12	88.54	14.76
Realisation Moment	9	16	132.61	14.73
Reflection	6	9	85.36	14.23
Client Led Discussion	4	5	38.14	9.54
Supported by Coach	6	7	37.44	6.24

Exploring Objectives is referred to 41 times and from 10 different narratives, and Setting Objectives is also frequently referred to (34 times in all 12 narratives). The activity that the 'Client leads the Discussion' is only referred to 5 times, in 4 different narratives. Achieving Business Outcomes is also only mentioned in 5 different narratives but has 19 references.

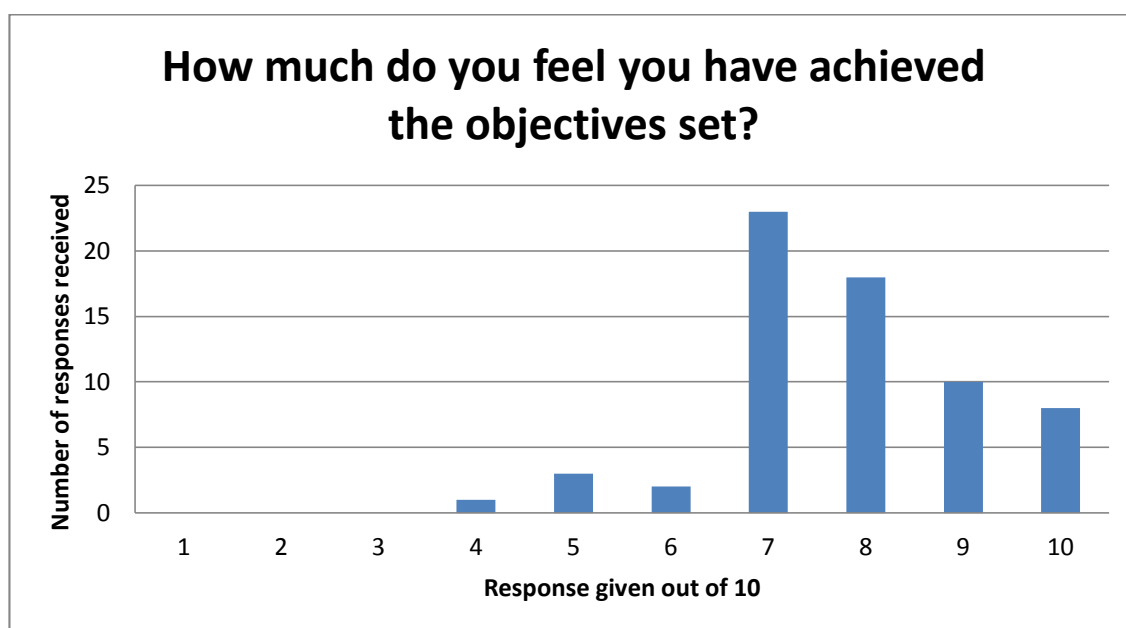
As previously outlined in the Literature chapter, style is considered to be the manner or behaviour that the coach takes to conduct the conversation. The styles, such as mentoring, coaching or instruction, might be flexibly applied and blended in a combination of approaches, depending on the conversation. In Table 5 above, the two styles that are identified in the table are mentoring and coaching. A coaching style is described in 6 of the 12 narratives and referenced 12 times. A mentoring style is described more frequently; in 7 narratives and referenced 15 times. The average coverage within a narrative is 15.61% for a mentoring style and 14.76% for a coaching style.

Discussing the achievement of business outcomes is only mentioned in 5 narratives but is referred to within these narratives 19 times. However, achieving progress towards objectives set is discussed much more, as is exploring objectives. The former is mentioned in 9 of the 12 narratives a total of 31 times, and the latter is mentioned in 10 of the narratives and 41 times. Achieving business outcomes is represented 4<sup>th</sup> on the table by an average coverage of 23.16% and achieving progress towards objectives set is positioned higher in the table, with the highest average percentage of 30.59%.

The survey questionnaire was designed to determine if the activities identified in this narrative stage were important. The survey would provide quantitative data and percentage ratings; as well as the qualitative information from open questions. A summary report of the survey data is in Appendix 5.

The graph below shows the number of responses for the quantitative question in the survey measuring the perceived success of the coaching. Respondents were asked to respond by rating how well they achieved their objectives out of 10.

**Graph 1:** How much do you feel you have achieved the objectives set?



The mean is the middle point between the two extremes and is calculated as the balance point in the distribution of the responses (middle point between 4 and 10

given the number of responses for each). No responses were received for 3/10 or less and so do not appear in the table.

**Table 6:** Calculating the mean

Benchmark Question: *On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') how much do you feel that you have achieved the objectives set?*

Answers to Benchmark question (out of 10)	Number of Responses	Number of Responses x Rating
x	f	fx
4	1	4
5	3	15
6	2	12
7	23	161
8	18	144
9	10	90
10	8	80
	65	506

$$\text{Mean} = 506 / 65 = 7.78$$

The mean is calculated at 7.78 and indicates that a high level of success was perceived.

## Survey Analysis

The survey questionnaire comprised 41 questions; 33 closed ended questions and 8 open ended questions (see Table 7 on page 144). It was split into the following sections: the Process; Coach Characteristics; Client's Experience; Style; Outcomes; and Factual including information about their management seniority, name of the coach, and date of completion of the Coaching Programme. The following statement was used to gauge the overall success of the effective coaching session and is regarded as the benchmark question: *On a scale of 1-10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') how much do you feel that you achieved the objectives set?*

**Table 7:** Breakdown of Questionnaire

Sections	Number of Closed Ended Questions in Questionnaire	Number of Open Ended Questions in Questionnaire	Total number of questions in Questionnaire
1.Process	7	1	8
2.Coach Characteristics	6	1	7
3.Client's Experience	14	2	16
4.Style	1	3	4
5.Outcomes	2*	1	3
6.Factual	3	0	3
Totals	33	8	41

\*Denotes the benchmark question: *On a scale of 1-10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') how much do you feel that you achieved the objectives set?*

### The Process

Statements in this first section of the questionnaire were about what the client felt was important in the process of the coaching sessions; including exploring how they achieved their objectives, progress made on the objectives, who led the discussion in the coaching sessions and whether they felt the coach was instrumental in their success. This would relate to the research question about the coaching having an impact on achieving business outcomes.

In the survey the majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' that the following 4 aspects in the process were important (n=80):

- Exploring possible solutions to achieve objectives (67.5%)
- Setting objectives to achieve success (51.9%)
- Discussing the intentions of how to achieve objectives (53.2%)
- Discussing the progress made on objectives at the following session (62%)

This demonstrates that the coaching session was considered more effective in achieving the business outcomes if the discussion between the coach and client was structured to include these aspects. However, it is recognised that the objectives set during the session need to be aligned with the business outcomes in order to achieve success here. This supports the hypothesis that coaching contributed to a positive impact on the business outcomes.

In the survey, 46.8% (37) of the 77 people who completed this question agreed that the coach was important to their success. Overall 82.20% (65) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that this was so and only 5.1% (4) disagreed with this statement. Defining the coaching style of specific coaches would also support the research question regarding the coaching style contributing to obtaining positive results.

### Coach Characteristics

The previous section illustrated that the coach was important to the success of the internal coaching. This section looks more closely at the coach's characteristics, as perceived by the clients.

The survey listed six characteristics that were drawn from the narratives as important. These included the coach understanding the culture and operations of the business, being independent to the department from which the client is based, trustworthy and objective. The following responses from the survey show how many participants felt these characteristics were important:

- the coach understands the culture and the operations of the company 61.5% (48);
- the coach is independent to the department 45.6% (36);
- the coach is someone who you can trust in confidential matters 78.5% (62);
- the coach has business credibility 48.8% (39);
- the coach is an objective person 64.6% (51);
- the coach is not the client's line manager 61.3% (49).

All of these were rated 'strongly agree' by the majority of respondents in all cases.

When considering the research question of whether the coach should be trained and qualified, it is noteworthy that the characteristics mentioned above are not conditional of training to be a coach; these are criteria which can be satisfied even if a coach has not undertaken any training. Indeed, they may not be prevalent in some coaches who have received training.

The analysis of the data showed that it was important to the client that the coach was an objective person and was independent from the department. Qualitative data taken from the narratives and survey also supports this outcome.

I have enjoyed having time with an independent person to discuss issues relating to work whose view I respect and that I know is unbiased (Participant 14.7 from the survey).

I enjoyed speaking to my trainer as someone outside of the company locally about issues I would not discuss to the same with anyone within my department (Participant 28.7 from the survey).

Good to take the time out to talk to someone who is not always in our business area (Participant 44.7 from the survey).

As this was independent to my department and role it meant I was more open and honest about my own abilities. It made me look deep inside and challenge things I believed to be right and look for different ways to achieve the same outcome (Participant 64.6 from the survey).

It was good to have someone from outside my direct line of management to talk issues through and look to reach an agreeable solution / action plan (Participant 79.6 from the survey).

Considering the qualitative findings and the quantitative survey data then the profile of an effective coach is inferred as someone who is

1. trustworthy with confidential matters,
2. an objective person,
3. understands the culture and operations of the company,
4. not the client's line manager,
5. has business credibility,
6. is independent to the department.

Comments from the coaches' narratives also supported the requirement for a coach who is objective;

Meeting regularly allowed (the client) the opportunity to plan her interventions, discuss her concerns about them, put them into practice and review them with someone objective (Coach, from narrative 11).

I was slightly concerned that I would not be objective enough given my relationship with (the client) but actually I think it aided the process as (the client)'s trust in me was obvious (Coach, from narrative 12).

In the survey, a little less than half of respondents 48.7% (37) disagreed that they would rather have discussed the issues with their line manager. In fact, 65.8% (50) of the 76 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this suggestion (80 respondents completed the actual survey). 61.8% (47) 'strongly agreed' that it was good to have a neutral and objective person to discuss issues with.

### Clients' Experience

In the survey, 50% of respondents said that the Coaching Programme was an extremely positive experience; 44.7% said it was positive; and 5.3% were neutral. This was also rated 3<sup>rd</sup> in the table showing percentage coverage of narrative for specific activities (Table 5 on page 141) and therefore can be considered important to clients.

The survey found that having realisation moments and ensuring that the sessions were challenging were rated highly. The majority of responses 'agreed' that it was important to have realisation /eureka moments 39.5% (30) and a total of 68.4% (52) either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that this was important. 48.1% (37) 'agreed' and a further 42.9% (33) 'strongly agreed' that it was important that the sessions were challenging and made you think differently. This supports the research hypothesis that internal coaching has contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes.

In fact, 91% or 70 of the 77 respondents who answered the question either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that it was important that the sessions were challenging and made them think differently. Comments from the survey confirm the finding that realisation moments were valued;

My light-bulb moment was in dealing with some specific colleagues; I now understand the way they work, and approach them in a way they understand, instead of what I thought they expected (Participant 61.14 from the survey).

One client who completed the narrative account supports the survey comment above that thinking differently and having time to reflect is important;

I found this to be a productive coaching session with (Coach). I think the fact that it all seemed to be an informal meeting, but you come away with some structured objectives is a very good way of coaching. I always feel energised and enthusiastic following these sessions. They always make me think about trying new ways of doing things and involving people (Client, from narrative 2).

Other comments from the qualitative sections of the survey supported the activity that making the client think differently was effective;

Helped me to see things more objectively (Participant 4.2).

The coaching helped me to take a step back, and think about how to approach my role (Participant 6.2).

Has made me look at how I approach things and question if I should continue to work in a particular manner. I am able to delegate better as a result (Participant 32.2).

The process allowed me to take a step back and reflect on situations and circumstances, which then lead to discussion of things I might have done differently (Participant 44.2).

It made me re-evaluate what I had been doing and put in place opportunities to try some of the changes discussed in the session to see if a different outcome could be achieved (Participant 64.2).

#### Comments from the survey

Many comments were made relating to increasing clients' confidence through the internal coaching. In the survey, 39% (30) 'agreed' and 32.5% (25) respondents 'strongly agreed' that their confidence had increased as a result of the coaching. Only 7 respondents 'disagreed' with this statement. Qualitative data from the narratives and survey questions supported the quantitative survey data;

Before starting the process, I wondered if any tangible outcomes would result from the coaching so was delighted to see (client) throw herself into her development. I was able to give her positive reinforcement as she achieved each of her goals she set herself and felt rewarded by her obvious gain in self-confidence (Coach 4, from narrative 11).



After being doubtful about the coaching at the beginning, (the coach) has worked her magic and I feel I am a different news editor to the one I was before. I have accepted that I panic, have learned to deal with that, and have become a lot more confident in what I do (Client, from narrative 10).

(The coach) also helped me with short-term goals throughout the process, which build up my knowledge and confidence. I think the most significant moment was early in the process when I started to fully understand comments made by some of my colleagues.... (Client, from narrative 9).

I have become more assertive in questioning why and when things are wrong. I am not afraid to take things to a higher level and I am more confident with confrontation (Participant 11.14 from the survey).

My confidence definitely grew as a result of the coaching course. This has been evident as this is commented on by many of my peers and management (Participant 59.7 from the survey).

Also my confidence has improved therefore I feel I am able to deal with situations in a better way to achieve results (Participant 41.14 from the survey).

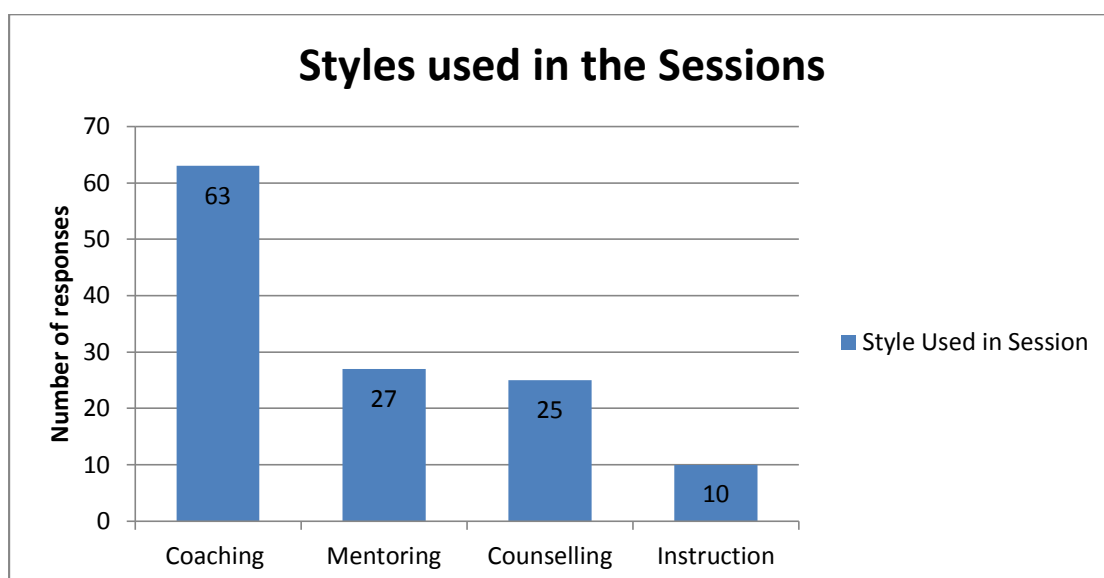
My confidence is a lot higher than it used to be and I feel confident about certain challenges than I possibly would have felt in the past (Participant 60.14 from the survey).

These testimonials support the research hypothesis that the internal coaching had a positive impact in achieving the business outcomes, especially due to increased confidence.

### Style

In the survey, 63 participants (50.4% of responses) perceived that a coaching style had been used; 27 participants (21.6%) perceived that a mentoring style was used; and 25 participants (20%) perceived a counselling style. Here, respondents were permitted to illustrate if a blend of styles were used by indicating more than one response. Therefore, there were a total of 125 responses for this question from 63 participants.

**Graph 2: Different Styles used in the Sessions**



The coaching style was perceived to be very evident in the coaching sessions. The response percentage for a coaching style was 90%. A mentoring style received a response percentage of 38.6%, counselling style was 35.7% and instruction style was 14.3%. This indicates that a blend of styles was perceived by the clients to be used in the coaching sessions.

### Outcomes

When participants were asked in the survey if they had seen any changes in terms of business outcomes that they could attribute to the Coaching Programme, 44.9% said yes; 34.8% said they were sure they contributed but were unable to demonstrate this; 10.1% said they were unsure; and 10.1% said no. Nearly 80% of the respondents confirmed that in their perception, coaching had contributed towards changes in terms of business outcomes and over half of these felt that they could demonstrate this. This claim supports the idea that internal coaching has an impact on achieving business outcomes.

Qualitative comments from the survey also support this finding that perceived changes in terms of business outcomes were attributed to the Coaching Programme;

I have changed the way I approach things, which has already seen a difference in productivity, and sales of the newspaper (Participant 6.14).

As part of that process, we've changed working practices and productivity has increased (Participant 7.14).

Sales leads communicated resulting in additional business and profit to the company which contributed to the bottom line (Participant 34.14).

The outstanding moment for me was that I made the decision to stop my team in xxxxxx selling slip pages. This increased my yield immediately. I would not have made this decision for myself or possibly even thought of implementing it without my coaching sessions (Participant 35.14).

A great example is last year I headed up a supplement which needed to involve all Sales Teams and departments i.e. production. We made £11k. This year I have headed up the same supplement in a tougher market place but we have achieved £23k. Through my coaching sessions I worked on my awareness of communicating and involving all departments so all deadlines were met which in turn kept business costs down and due to improved planning greater amount of revenue secured (Participant 75.14).

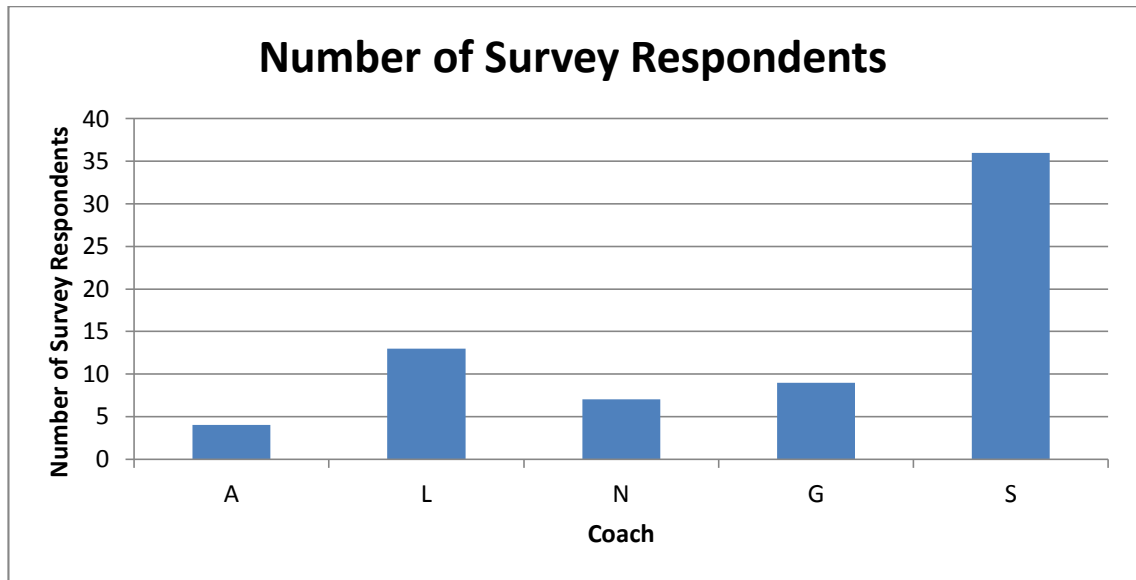
#### Comments from the Survey.

##### Factual

The following information from the survey represents the number of survey respondents each coach had developed.

Of the 69 people who responded to this question, Coach S had coached over half of them (52.2%). The smallest population of respondents had been coached by Coach A (5.8%). The survey also shows that clients from all coaches had perceived success in their coaching. However, four of the five coaches were unqualified and scarcely trained or experienced in coaching. Coach N had received little training in coaching contradicting the belief that coaches should be appropriately trained and qualified.

**Graph 3:** Number of Survey Respondents for each Coach



The graph shows the individual coaches listed across the x-axis and the number of survey responses for each one.

**Summary:**

Key activities were derived from the 12 narratives provided by coaches and clients. A survey of 41 qualitative and quantitative questions was administered based on these activities. A benchmark quantitative question asking about perceptions of achieving objectives set was used to measure perceived success of the coaching. The items which were found to be important in the internal coaching sessions were;

**The Process:**

- Setting objectives and exploring solutions to achieve them,
- Discussing progress made on objectives, at the following session,
- Your coach was important to your success.

**Coach Characteristics:**

- The coach understands the culture and operations of the business,
- The coach is independent to the department,
- The coach is trustworthy in confidential matters,
- The coach has business credibility,
- The coach is an objective person,

- The coach is not the client's line manager

#### Clients' Experience:

- Coaching was a positive experience,
- The sessions were challenging and encouraged the client think differently,
- Realisation moments were important,
- The confidence of the client increased through coaching.

#### Style:

- A customised blend of styles (e.g. mentoring, coaching, instruction) was used.

#### Outcomes:

- Changes in terms of business outcomes (sales, profit, wastage, turnover) were experienced.

This supported the research hypothesis that internal coaching contributed to a positive impact on the business outcomes. Although the findings show that having a coach is important, it is inconclusive whether the coach is more effective if trained and qualified. Many indicators support a blended approach to coaching sessions using coaching, mentoring with some instruction. Counselling was not supported by clients.

Table 8 (on page 154) illustrates the items perceived to be most effective during the internal coaching sessions. The qualitative survey information represents the top scoring statements for each section in the 'strongly agree' rating only. The qualitative information in the final column represents the comments that clients have offered as important and effective for them.

**Table 8: Summary**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Qualitative (Survey)</b> Top 3 in each section of 'strongly agree' only.	<b>Quantitative</b> <b>(Survey and</b> <b>Narrative)</b>
Process	Explore possible solutions to achieve success. (67.5%) To discuss how you intended to achieve the objectives. (53.2%) To discuss progress made at the following session. (62%)	
Coach Characteristics	The coach is someone you can trust with confidential matters. (78.5%) The coach is an objective person. (64.6%) The coach understands the culture and operations of the business. (61.5%)	The coach is objective and independent to the department.
Clients' Experience	It was good to have a neutral and objective person to discuss the issues with. (61.8%)	Confidence increased during the coaching.
Style	Coaching style was used. (50.4%)	
Factual and outcomes	Changes in terms of business outcomes. (44.9%)	

## Analysis and Discussion

### Introduction

The research, conducted in a brand name media organisation, was undertaken to establish if internal coaching had contributed to a successful impact on business outcomes. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from contributors who had participated in the coaching which was preceded by feedback gathered using a 360° feedback instrument.

Qualitative data was gathered in the first stage of the research using written Narratives to gather information from 12 participants who had either given or received coaching. Information from this stage was used to construct a survey questionnaire to obtain confirmation through both qualitative and quantitative data in stage two. In the narrative stage a software package was used to organise data and determine the percentage of script that participants had written about key activities. Other data gathered from the research is also used to support findings.

Three research questions were formulated:

- Does the coaching style applied within an internal coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
- Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching?
- Does internal coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

The findings support the hypothesis that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. A blended approach to coaching; using coaching, mentoring and instructional styles, was seen as important in achieving success. The style of coaching may also promote an atmosphere where the client is encouraged to reflect, explore ideas and be challenged on actions, ideas and progress. Having an accountability partner as a coach was also seen in a positive light. These aspects positively support the first research question about the style of coaching provided in obtaining positive results.

It was clear that the coach was important to the success of the coaching and some aspects of the characteristics of the coach were also strongly supported and evidenced by clients. Examples of this such characteristics that are mentioned by participants included having a coach who is objective, understands the nature of the business and culture, is trustworthy in confidential matters and who is not the line manager of the client. These help to develop a productive relationship between the coach and client.

Providing a context where the client could reflect and enjoy realisation moments was also found to be valued by clients. The findings also show that certain aspects of a clients' experience were important in achieving a successful outcome and these included factors such as making the sessions a positive experience and nurturing confidence in the client.

The second research question focused on the credentials of the internal coach and whether the training and qualifications made a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching. It was inconclusive as to whether a trained and qualified coach provided a more effective positive impact. There is data to support the claim that relevant training and qualifications for the coach were not conditional as far as the success in achieving business outcomes through coaching, so long as other aspects such as an understanding of the culture within the organisation and operational proceedings were satisfied. Being independent to the client and providing an objective view were also important in this area.

The third research question asked whether internal coaching had an impact on achieving business outcomes. In this study, business outcomes were recognised as either quantitative (sales, profit, wastage, turnover) or qualitative business measures or observations in behaviours that contributed towards a change in performance. Although it is often difficult to identify reliable metrics to measure increased performance due to coaching (CIPD, 2012), O'Connor and Lages (2007: 205) suggest that such outcomes due to the impact of behavioural changes might include,



- better results from the team – improved speed and/or quality of team projects
- improved morale resulting in better or more work
- fewer days lost to sickness
- more new ideas with business applications
- fewer customer complaints

Although this is not an exhaustive list, it provides an indication of the sometimes intangible outcomes that might be expected. Other examples might be more engaged staff or a more task-focused team.

This research found that participants perceived success in achieving business outcomes which could be attributed to the internal coaching undertaken. The respondents also provided qualitative evidence to support the notion that internal coaching had a positive impact on performance. It was noted that having the opportunity to discuss progress and achievements with the coach was valued by the client.

It is important that other attributes are recognised in this research. The Coaching Programme was recognised for increasing confidence levels of clients as well as providing therapeutic value. These, combined with having an overall positive experience was also recognised as important in managing workplace stress by participants.

It is also evident from the narratives and qualitative comments in the survey that during the *Coaching Programme* the participants benefited from the attention and focus on their personal development. Some participants admit the coaching sessions increased motivation at work and provided them supplementary support at a time when the recession attracted new challenges to the business. For example, many managers who received coaching said that it was good to feel their commitment to the organisation was being recognised and rewarded with some personal development at a time when the business was cutting resources, freezing pay awards and when morale was low.

The data supports the first and third research questions on internal coaching. Although it is inconclusive whether specific training and qualifications made a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching, there is evidence which shows that the least experienced and trained coach had a positive impact with their clients. This is supported by both qualitative and quantitative data. It is important to remember that the research was not focused on comparing one coach to another in the organisation but information gathered has provided positive results regardless of the qualifications held.

### **The Coaching Style**

Within the organisation being studied, coaching was perceived as having a very broad remit, ranging from instructional or directional activities through to more exploratory discussions. Coaching had previously been used with the senior management teams within the organisation and was seen as a luxury development opportunity. Directional coaching activities that were used routinely with more junior managers as part of their daily duties was not regarded as focused development time; rather more as an expectation of training them to do the job.

Although carrying the title of 'coach', the coach may indeed be coaching or may be integrating a blend of different styles to achieve the clients' objectives (Minter and Thomas, 2000). The first research question focused on the coaching style; not necessarily to define it, but to understand and appreciate whether a blend of styles could be effective or even deemed acceptable within coaching parameters. This was captured by the research question: *Does the coaching style applied within the internal coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?* It looked at differentiating between the styles used; mentoring, coaching, instruction and counselling.

The qualitative and quantitative data analysis found that the style adopted by the coach in the coaching sessions was important and valued by clients. In the narratives, the clients refer to their coaches as both mentors and coaches. The narratives demonstrated a similar percentage of coverage for a coaching style compared to a mentoring style. A coaching style was described for a maximum

coverage of 37.81% of any one narrative. For mentoring, the description for any one narrative was 39.64%. The clients were not specifically asked to describe what styles were used when the narratives were requested; these were the styles that were described in the narratives.

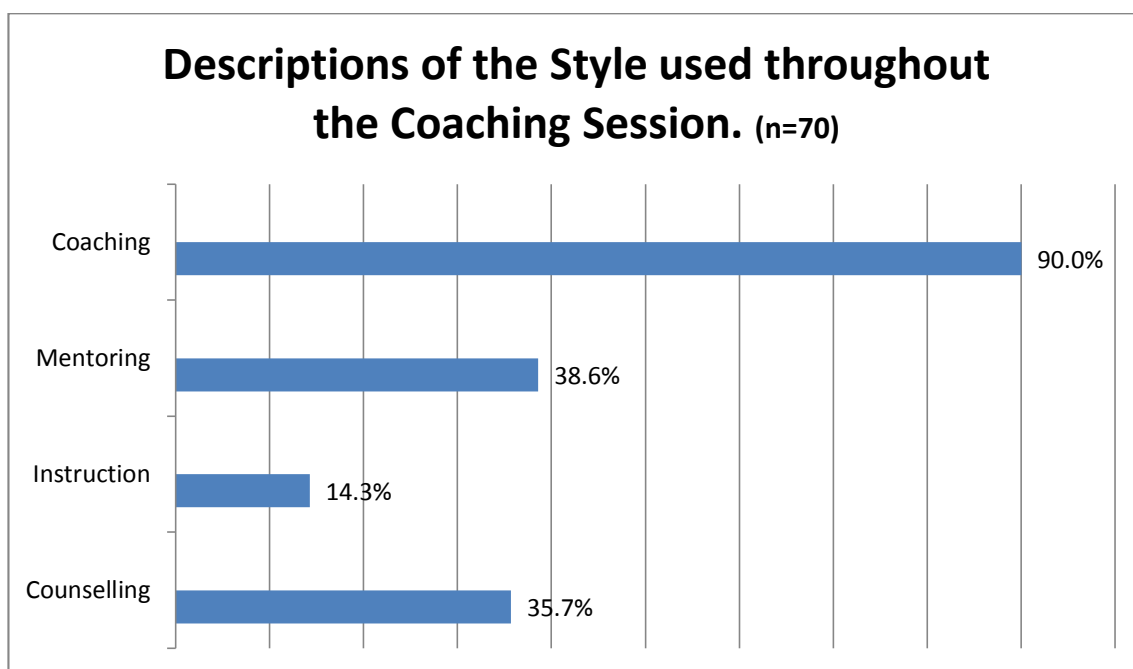
In the survey, participants were asked to indicate which descriptor best described the style used throughout the coaching session: coaching, mentoring, instruction and counselling. They were encouraged to 'tick all that applied', suggesting that multiple styles could be chosen. 90% clients (63 of the 70 respondents) reported that a coaching style best described the style used in the session. Mentoring received 27 responses (38.6%), indicating that some clients felt that a blended style had been used combining at least two different styles; since clients were allowed to indicate more than one style. Instruction received the least number of responses from this question, indicating that just 14% of respondents felt that an instruction style had been used. This is illustrated on page 160, in Graph 4: Descriptions of the Style used throughout the Coaching Session.

It is feasible that a coaching style was used much more than represented here. The graph only represents what was described in the narratives provided. Equally, other styles could have been applied but were not reported in the narratives.

Downey (2003) refers to the more instructional style as directive coaching, which he argues is less effective as it removes the opportunity for the person being coached to experience the intrinsic learning that non-directive coaching promotes. Matthews (2010) also writes about why managers struggle to implement coaching more frequently, agreeing with Fournies' (2000) and Downey's (2003) comments that many managers often resort back to an instructional telling style which doesn't encourage self-dependency amongst team members.

**Graph 4:** Descriptions of the Style used throughout the Coaching Session

Indications of the style or styles used throughout a coaching session. Participants were allowed to tick more than one style if they thought that more than one style was used by the coach.



The combination of styles recorded in the survey supports the research hypothesis that a blended style is effective in the coaching session, as 72% of the respondents (63 + 27 responses from a total of 125) reported either coaching or a blend of coaching and mentoring style was used, and 59 of the 65 (91%) respondents who answered the question on achieving objectives claimed to have achieved 7/10 or above in realising their objectives.

The survey also asked clients to describe or define what they understood as coaching. It was evident that support and guidance was high on the agenda, since these were mentioned in the majority of qualitative responses. Being objective, driven and improving performance to realise their goals was also important. The following response provides an example of a client's definition of coaching:

To empower a person to go into any situation and find answers or the right path independently of instruction. Coaching gives you the opportunity to explore and understand why you have done something, what led to it happening and if in the future you could do it in a way which gave a quicker or better outcome (Participant 23.8 from the survey).

This response also alludes to other aspects such as challenging clients to think differently and exploring ideas. Coaching was perceived by the clients quite differently to mentoring. When asked to describe what mentoring meant, respondents felt that it was more about learning from someone with more experience and knowledge, often in a more senior position:

Where someone with more experience assists someone with less experience (Participant 15.9 from the survey).

A relationship whereby a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced person in a particular line of work or field (Participant 4.9 from the survey).

Both of these descriptions support the notion that mentoring cultivates experience and potential. Megginson and Clutterbuck's (2010) write that mentoring 'relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person' (Megginson and Clutterbuck, 2010: 4). Unlike coaching, it seemed more acceptable to the participants that giving advice plays a role in the mentoring relationship; a relationship where the mentor is often more senior and certainly more experienced:

I believe mentoring is passing on your knowledge and best practises to someone less senior than yourself, for that person's development (Participant 60.9 from the survey).

It was also felt that the mentor should lead by example. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2010) and Berard (2005) all recognise that a role model is often the part that a mentor, rather than a coach, is required to play:

Mentoring is leading by example (Participant 37.9 from the survey).

Setting an example for someone else to follow, being around to offer advice and support when needed Leading by example. (Participant 52.9 from the survey).

Throughout these qualitative responses, it was evident that a blended approach could acceptably be adopted:

Mentoring is working alongside someone to show them how a job is done - in the first instance mentoring could start off as them shadowing you, but as the process continues the role of mentor should take on the role of coach, which enables the individual to find their own way to do things (Participant 43.9 from the survey).

Mentoring is like coaching but over a longer period of time so you learn by example (Participant 67.9 from the survey).

Counselling could be giving someone advise on a situation, but should also focus on using a coaching style to ensure the individual being counselled arrives at their own decision (Participant 43.10 from the survey).

(Counselling is) very similar to mentoring and coaching a combination of both (Participant 32.10 from the survey).

Counselling was seen as dealing with issues or problems, although not necessarily work-based ones. Young and Nicol (2007) also define counselling as helping well-adjusted people to 'solve problems, make decisions and cope with stresses of everyday life' (Young and Nicol, 2007: 21). Bozer and Sarros (2012) also assumed the absence of serious mental health problem with clients when referring to the application of development:

Seeking any problems that an individual has and helping to find solutions to fix these and improve on the current situation (Participant 61.10 from the survey).

Someone that provides direction or advice as to a decision or course of action usually on more personal issues (Participant 4.10 from the survey).

These descriptions support the definition endorsed by Gyllensten and Palmer (2005); who also acknowledge the amount of stress and negative perception which can be associated with counselling:

Counselling can be defined as a tertiary level intervention that aims to assist individuals who are experiencing problems (work and home related) and high levels of distress (Briner, 1997 in Gyllensten and Palmer, 2005: 75).

In some organisations, even going for counselling can cause additional stress as counselling is perceived as acknowledging a weakness and may impact on career aspirations. Coaching may be perceived in a more positive and proactive light than counselling for this reason.

Counselling was certainly seen as providing more advice and direction in resolving the concern than were coaching or mentoring; but listening was also seen as a major part of the counselling process. In counselling there is:

More of a listening process than the above two where the person being counselled is skilled but has problems which they need to talk through (Participant 42.10 from the survey).

Offering advice; listening (Participant 54.10 from the survey).

There seemed to be some overlap with the understanding of development descriptors such as coaching, mentoring and counselling but in summary participants understood coaching to be an exploratory process about supporting and guiding people to realise their own goals to improve their performance or realise a resolution. Mentoring was described as a sharing of knowledge, experience and advice, sometimes by example and usually from a more senior to a junior person with the focus around development for future roles. Counselling was seen as a person listening to issues and problems before analysing them and imparting advice or direction to deal with them and move forward. There were some commonalities in all three areas: listening, supporting, empathy, moving forward.

Evidently a blend of styles was used within the coaching sessions although this approach was not perceived as less effective. This blended style of coaching is supported by Schein (2006), Hargrove (2003) and Kinlaw (1989), according to Moen and Skaalvik (2009), who embrace coaching as:

... everything an executive consultant or coach does to realize the coachee's potential... (Moen and Skaalvik, 2009: 32).

This account may be rather too vague or all-encompassing for some to accept under the description of coaching; although it does imply a blended approach to coaching. It removes the parameters of coaching and allows all manner of

development activities to fall under the heading. Grant, Curtayne and Burton (2009) also describe a blended approach when they adapt Kilburg's (1996) description of what a coach does:

...a coach (who) uses a range of cognitive and behavioural techniques in order to help the client achieve a mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving his or her professional performance and well-being and the effectiveness of the organisation (Adapted from Kilburg, 1996 in Grant *et al.*, 2009: 396).

This description acknowledges the aspiration to improve performance through coaching and embraces a blended approach. Opposition to this blended school of thought draw a firm distinction between coaching, counselling, consultation, teaching, mentoring and other helping relationship roles; and include Downey (1999), Whitmore (2002), and Flaherty (1999) according to Moen and Skaalvik (2009). Whitmore (2003) does acknowledge however, that 'there is no one right way to coach' (Whitmore, 2003: 171), believing that every individual is different and therefore applying the same learning strategy to each will not be most effective. In reality, an effective coach may prefer to promote whichever style (pure or blended) best optimises the potential of the individual being developed. In this research, most participants were able to demonstrate that they understood a distinction between the styles, regardless of how effective they felt they were.

The relationship or 'chemistry' (The Ridler Report, 2013: 4) between client and coach is also acknowledged to be critical in the success of coaching (Pak Tee Ng, 2012; Smither, 2011; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Smither (2011) and Grant, Green and Rynsaardt (2010) describe the coaching relationship as a 'working alliance' (154). This notion of a mutual partnership is also echoed by Berard (2005) who describes coaching as a 'collaborative relationship between employee and manager that is rooted in mutual respect and rapport' (Berard, 2005: 31).

Passmore (2007) also discussed the relationship between coach and the client. He argues that the best interests of the client should be foremost at all times and that the relationship that the coach strives to build should be warm, trusting and open; although arguably this description should not be exclusively applied to



coaches but any development professional. He concludes by reiterating that 'developing and maintaining a coaching partnership with the coachee is crucial' (Passmore, 2007: 76).

Trustworthiness is an important property of a constructive relationship. In the research survey, 78.5% of respondents strongly agreed, and no one disagreed, that this was important to the effectiveness of the session. Flaherty (2010) maintains that assessing trust is a matter of evaluating competence in a person, although it doesn't have to be a universal judgement about that person and can be specific to the areas of discussion or activity (e.g. coaching).

Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2010) and Downey (2003) believe that trust is important and that it should be two-way; the coach needs to be able to trust that the person being coached will implement the actions agreed. Downey (2003) also feels that judgement is not a trait that easily fits into coaching; rather a coach needs to be honest:

Judgement and assessment do not fit easily with a non-judgemental, non-directive coaching style. And yet there is a need to be honest (Downey, 2003: 138).

Behaviours that tended to be most productive in coaching were perceived by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) members as providing a 'supportive but challenging and accountable relationship' (CIPD, 2012: 6). Flaherty (2010) suggests that one of the most powerful ways to understand coaching is to look at the end; what it is trying to achieve. He presents the role of the coach as an 'accountability partner' that supports someone in achieving their goals (Flaherty, 2010: 3). This notion is also supported by Blakey and Day (2013). Being committed to coaching and accountable is different from just participating in development, writes Berglas (2013). Grant *et al.* (2010) list collaboration and accountability as core principles of coaching. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) report that the relationship between client and coach, the working alliance, is the most consistently identified factor contributing to the success of a coaching engagement.

When asked in the survey, who participants felt should lead or set the agenda for the coaching session, there seemed to be an indifferent response. The majority

(54.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed that the client should lead but 38% agreed or strongly agreed that it should be the client. 33.8% responded positively when asked if the coach should lead the session but 50.6% neither agreed nor disagreed. However, 15.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed that it should be the coach, whereas only 7.6% disagreed that the client should lead the session.

Grant *et al.* (2009), Homan and Miller (2006), and Evers, Brouwers and Tomic (2006) all believe that the client have the control over the agenda and the direction of the session. The former cite Locke (1996) when they explain:

It is important that the coachee has a choice in defining the goals. This is because commitment to self-set goals tends to be higher than commitment to goals set by other people (Locke, 1996 in Grant *et al.*, 2009: 404).

This may be true of a person familiar with the coaching session structure but for new comers to coaching, the expectation of leading a session might prove a little daunting at first. The coach may initially have to skilfully question the person receiving coaching in order to elicit their goals, rather than imposing them on the individual. Witherspoon and White (1996) are more explicit when they point out that the person receiving the coaching should control the situation:

Accept that the coach is not in control. Just as the tennis coach does not hit the ball him- or herself, the business coach does not control the coaching conversation (Witherspoon and White, 1996: 15).

Although the objectives set should be in-line with the organisation's goals, Grant *et al.* (2009) write that forcing employees to undertake goals set by others can often cause resentment and alienation. Coaching assumes a degree of maturity and accountability in the person being coached, relying on them to take responsibility and implement agreed actions:

Coaching emphasizes the importance of coachee generated solutions and strategies through facilitating for individual empowerment and competence values. Thus, coaching emphasises that the coachee is responsible and should be in control of the situation (Moen and Skaalvik, 2009: 45).

Taking control of the situation to generate one's own goals may be perceived as different to leading the session. If one subscribes to the argument that whoever asks the questions controls the conversation, the coach may take the role of control. Generating goals and direction of the session, however can be done by the client if the coach is skilful at asking the right question at the appropriate time. Although Clutterbuck and Megginson (2010) recognise that through development and therefore maturity, the coach may start to relinquish their natural desire to be in control of the conversation, they support Moen and Skaalvik (2009) who advise that the balance of control should lie with the client to direct the conversation.

The results from the research supported this, although a strong link was not identified because many respondents were indifferent about who should lead the conversation. That said 12 of the 77 who responded to this question (15.6%) disagreed that the coach should control the direction and only 6 of 79 participants responded negatively to the client leading the session.

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) and Neenan and Palmer (2001) use the phrase 'guided discovery'; a collaborative process promoting insight and better rational decision making to help people reach their own conclusions and solutions. Berard (2005), Griffiths and Campbell (2009), and Hicks and McCracken (2009) also regard the coaching journey as one of self-discovery. Looking at things differently was also seen as a key attribute of coaching by the survey respondents. Having the opportunity to explore issues, without ramifications, to find a solution:

Coaching is guiding with a positive influence, explaining different ways of finding solutions to problems or issues that others would not necessarily have thought about. Looking at issues from every angle and discussing the benefits and pitfalls (Participant 40.8 from the survey).

Challenging a client to think differently was deemed important by respondents in this research. 91% of the 80 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were challenging and made them think differently.

Respondents felt that the coaching helped them to think differently about events, often prompting realisation moments; and participants were then able to react

differently to events. The survey found that only 1 person of the 77 who responded to this question felt that the sessions didn't make them think differently. Six people neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, leaving 91% (70 respondents) who agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were challenging and made you think differently.

Practicing consultants, Witherspoon and White (1996) write anecdotally that, when tough questions are asked lessons are learned from experience and practical insights, which are then used to prepare for the future. In her evaluation into the appropriateness of cognitive-behavioural approach to executive coaching, Canadian assistant professor of Human Resource Management, Ducharme (2004) surmised that:

Altering one's thought patterns in reaction to an event can result in changes to the way one subsequently behaves (Ducharme, 2004: 215).

How one perceives and interprets a situation may determine consequent behaviour. There have been increasing amounts of research into positive psychology which finds that deliberately having an optimistic view can encourage a paradigmatic effect on situations and subsequent actions. Ducharme's (2004) deductions support the account of Neenan and Palmer (2001) who also emphasise that cognitive-behavioural approaches are not necessarily about how we react to events; but that our reactions are largely determined by our *views* of those events. They continue that coaching is important in providing valued lessons in guiding current behaviour and, subsequently, decision making.

The following statements from the survey support Ducharme's (2004) argument that the person being coached stops to think about their approach and looks for alternative strategies to deal with situations:

The coaching made me take a step back, and think about how I approach my role. It also helped me cope with situations differently, which in the past I believe I had not coped well with (Participant 6.4 from the survey).

The coaching sessions gave me a rare chance to take time out to consider how I went about my tasks. My manager is not very good at encouraging me in everything I do so it was refreshing to discover that actually I could be more effective with a little professional help – and could improve (Participant 44.6 from the survey).

Challenging clients, encouraging them to think differently about events and allowing them time to consider and have realisation moments in coaching sessions supports the final research question that coaching can have an impact on achieving the business outcomes. This research in the media organisation found that respondents felt the realisation moments, often called ‘turning points’ (De Haan, Bertie, Day and Sills, 2010) were important. Only 4 of 76 respondents who answered the question felt that realisation moments were not important.

Qualitative comments were also supportive of the importance of these turning points:

My ‘eureka’ moment was when (the coach) asked me if I was capable of taking on X’s job and why would Y give me that position if it ever arose. I realised I didn’t have the experience or the skills to do that job well enough to do it justice, and that this had to change. I literally had to take the bull by the horns and put myself in the position where I could gain the experience and develop myself as a news editor or risk being overlooked by the editor, which I didn’t want (Client, from narrative 10).

I think the most significant moment was early in the process when I started to fully understand comments made (by) some of my colleagues, in particular X. He encouraged me to be confident in my abilities, and to realise that good performance amongst my staff was a basic requirement of the job, not a perk. This simplified my thinking a great deal (Client, from narrative 9).

My light-bulb moment was in dealing with some specific colleagues. I now understand the way they work, and approach them in a way they understand, instead of what I thought they expected (Participant 60.14 from the survey).

When asking respondents in the survey what they had got from the experience, similar comments were found:

Previously I always considered other people’s views and feeling etc, but sometimes my manner didn’t reflect that. But my coach has shown me how I can get over that, and that’s been a “eureka moment” (Participant 7.7 from the survey).

My coach made me think about why my personal values ie honesty, trust are so important to me and the fact that this comes from my childhood. I would never have thought like that before. My eureka moment was a revelation to me and what I learnt I still think about regularly (Participant 35.7 from the survey).

The respondents were also asked to rate their experience of coaching and justify the rating given. The following comments are taken from this section:

It was the realisation that I actually had the answers just needed to talk them through and reflect to understand – I am a very positive person so having the solution was extremely motivational (Participant 38.6 from the survey. Rated: extremely positive).

It was refreshing to be able to talk freely and this brought what is really considered important to light. It allowed me to realise what I wanted and what I could do to get it (Participant 64.6 from the survey. Rated: extremely positive).

It seems that allowing people who are receiving coaching the opportunity to have realisation moments will contribute towards coaching having an impact on achieving the business outcomes.

The CIPD (2012) support the use of critical reflection in ensuring that coaching works. In Snyder's (1995) anecdotal account, he cites Peter Fidler, president of the computer consulting company, Integrated Systems. Fidler recognised the benefits of being able to reflect on activities to help move forward, supporting the comments made by participants above:

You can get stuck in the day-to-day. My coach forces me to take a step back and look in all directions (Fidler in Snyder, 1995: 30).

Reflection is an important element to an individual's development, as the brain is allowed time to process information and make sense of it. Bachkirova and Cox (2007) describe the 'cognitive-reflective processes, or ego-development,' as an essential part of the development of self-identity and maturing of interpersonal relationships (Bachkirova and Cox, 2007 in Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2010: 5). Although they refer to the reflection done by coaches for their own development, Laske (2005) agrees that the result of self-awareness then gives a person a better opportunity to articulate, influence and interact with others. This is arguably true for both the coach and the person being coached. Clutterbuck

and Megginson (2010) also confirm that reflection is beneficial, referring to classroom experiments where coaches have been restricted on the number of times they can speak; giving the person being coached maximum time for reflection.

In the survey, 95% of respondents felt that reflection was a useful learning technique and an important aspect of the coaching (n=77). Griffiths and Campbell (2009) attribute reflection as the time that learning occurs. They feel that skilful questioning drives the process of knowledge discovery through exploration and challenge, triggering the process of the clients' reflection:

Importantly, it was within the process of reflecting that clients first discovered new knowledge, and finally, coaches listened to clients' reflections within which process clients' discoveries and new knowledge were identified and noticed (Griffiths and Campbell, 2009: 20).

Following their study of four International Coach Federation Master Certified Coaches, one Professional Certified Coach, and nine past and present clients, Griffiths and Campbell (2009) derive that coaching appears to facilitate deep and powerful learning, facilitated by the process of reflection.

In summary, the responses in the research demonstrated that the perceptions of the respondents were generally complementary to the literature-based understanding of the distinction between coaching, mentoring and counselling. Descriptions of each of the styles enabled some common characteristics to be associated with each and determined that a blended approach had been utilised in coaching sessions; yet these remained effective as far as the client was concerned. This supported the research hypothesis that a blended approach to coaching, using coaching, mentoring and instructional styles adopted by the coach, was important in achieving success. It also demonstrated that internal coaching is not a simple tool, technique nor approach but had many facets integrated into development interventions used in this organisation.

There are a number of elements that have shown value for ensuring that the style of the internal coach is effective. The key elements within this are; the blend of style applied during coaching; facilitating time for realisation or Eureka moments;

making the sessions challenging so that the person being coached thinks differently about situations; allowing the client to have time to reflect; permitting the client to control the direction of the conversation.

Realisation moments and challenging clients are discussed much less in the current literature. Nominal empirical research (Kilburg, 2004; Fischer and Beimers, 2009) has been done into the effective process of coaching, and 'despite abundant prescriptive literature' (Griffiths and Campbell, 2009: 16), much of the 'process and practice of executive coaching remains shrouded in mystery' (Bono, Purvanova, Towler and Peterson, 2009: 362).

### **The Credentials of the Coach**

The research also focused on whether the coach being trained and qualified made a difference to the outcomes of coaching. The second research question was *does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching?* The qualitative information obtained from the narratives and the survey regarding the coach and how they conducted the coaching sessions provides additional support for the coach being important. For example, providing an objective viewpoint during the discussion was felt to be invaluable for the client. Other characteristics of the coach that were advocated included being credible and understanding the culture of the organisation; maintaining confidentiality of the content of the discussions; and being independent to the department that the client was part of. In other words, the coach had no line responsibility for the person receiving coaching.

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) acknowledge the continued debate about the qualification and training requirements of a coach, specifically whether coaches should hold qualifications in psychology. Stern (2004) lists a number of qualities that he claims a coach should have including being competent, confident, independent, business savvy, action oriented, credible, confidential and genuine interest in the client:



The executive coach must be versed in the business and the skills the leader needs in order to succeed (Stern, 2004: 155).

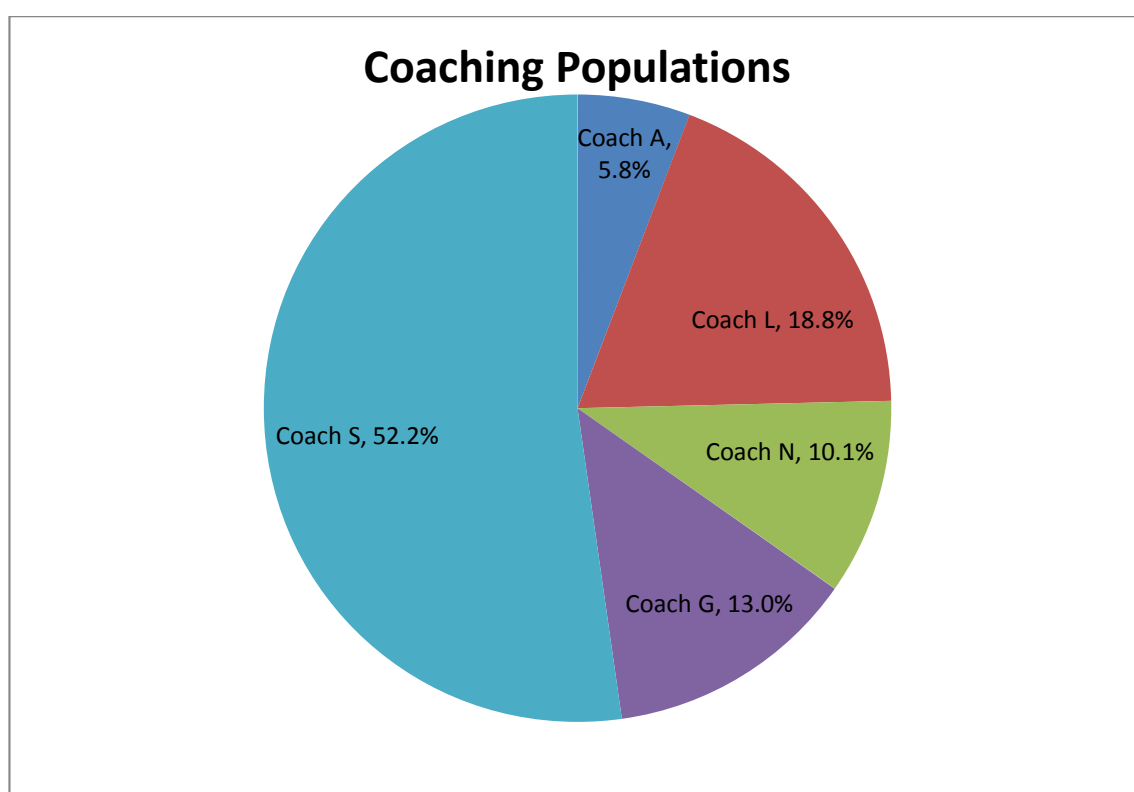
This might be expected from any professional practitioner. Psychology-trained authors of coaching (Kilburg, 2004; Passmore, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003) recommend some aspect of psychology training in the coach's accomplishments although recognise that very few coaching practitioners have this level of education or specialist training; but feel that business acumen is crucial to the credibility of the coach. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) present an alternative view that suggests a mixture of training in psychology and experience or understanding of business.

In this research into the media organisation, only Coach S had any training or qualifications in psychology or coaching. The other coaches had no qualifications in psychology. Four of the five internal coaches participating in this research were also unqualified and inexperienced in coaching; having only received the 2 days of preparation/training provided by the organisation being studied, to be a coach in this programme. Coach S was an experienced and qualified practicing coach. The training and preparation provided by the organisation in anticipation of the Coaching Programme was not accredited, was provided by an external training provider tailored to the requirements to fit this purpose, and was set up to prepare the coach for the administrative and coaching activities of the Coaching Programme.

There is considerable variation among organisations with regard to the amount of training that internal coaches receive. Some internal coaches have received training aligned to International Coach Federation (ICF) core competencies and others have received only a couple of days training or less (ICF, 2013). 23% internal coaches have no minimum level of coaching or accreditation reported in the Ridler Report (2013). Some organisations have a pool of internal coaches, specifically chosen for undertaking internal coaching but in this research, like the majority of internal coaches, the coaching was part-time, undertaken by learning and development managers, of which coaching was just one of their duties in the day job (The Ridler Report, 2013).

The findings indicated that all coaches experienced some success even though the coaches coached groups of differing sizes. For example, Coach N coached only 10.8% of the population of respondents. The size of the populations coached by the respective coaches is illustrated below in Graph 5: Coaching Populations. This graph illustrates that Coach S coached the largest population of participants in the research and Coach A, the smallest.

**Graph 5:** Coaching Populations



In the findings chapter, it was seen that the coach providing an objective viewpoint had some value. The perceived success of the Coaching Programme supports the essential criteria that Canadian consultant Watt (2004) suggests are required for an effective internal coach:

However, if an internal member of the organization can wear a neutral 'coach' hat, balance the roles they play in relation to the coachee and is equipped with the essential coaching skills then an internal coach can be effective (Watt, 2004: 16).

Watt acknowledges that people internal to an organisation can be effective if they are independent and objective. This is supported in the findings both by qualitative and quantitative data.

Three of the 7 respondents who provided written narratives in this research also made direct reference to the coach being independent to the department. The ICF (2013) found that external coaches were perceived to 100% independent by respondents, who were mainly people internal to organisation and decision makers when it came to using coaching. This perception was held because coaching was an external coach's main and only job and that consequently they don't come with any preconceived ideas or assumptions about the organisation or internal politics. The report (ICF, 2013) also found that at times external coaches were found to have a lack of understanding on the company culture.

Matthews (2010) outlines the advantages and disadvantages of involving an external coach but recognises that arguably they don't always hold the client as accountable as an internal coach might:

An external 'executive' coach, brought from the outside into an organisation can enjoy the 'luxury' of independent detachment (Matthews, 2010: 4).

Being outside the organisation can have the sense of 'detachment' but this can also be construed as not understanding the culture of the organisation and may alienate external coaches. One can be detached from the department but still engrossed in the culture of the organisation, benefiting from both detachment and appreciation. Shuit (2005) confirms that having no stake in the business can ensure external coaches are uniquely suited to intervene. On balance, Matthews (2010) also highlights the difficulty that internal coaches may have on managing the 'power play' due to the senior position either the coach or person being coached might be in.

The coach being independent to the department was deemed important in the research survey in the media organisation. 81% of the 80 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that it was important that the coach is independent to the department and 98% of the respondents believe it was important that the coach was objective.

Clients of Coach N had experienced strong success during the Coaching Programme. In the research survey, when asked to what extent clients of Coach N felt it was important for the coach to be independent to the department, two respondents agreed and the remaining five strongly agreed. When asked how well they felt they had achieved their objectives all of those coached by Coach N responded with 7/10 or greater. Four agreed and three strongly agreed that the coach (N) was effective in helping them to achieve their objectives. However, when asked if the coach was important to their success one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed, two agreed and four strongly agreed. This suggests that the majority, albeit small in comparison with the overall population, felt that the coach was effective and important to them achieving the success they enjoyed in their objectives.

The results from this research in the media organisation showed that understanding the business and its culture was important (94.8% agreed or strongly agreed) and having business credibility (87.6% agreed or strongly agreed) within the organisation was almost equally so. Credibility and gravitas were found to be the most important factors when recruiting a coach but an 'appreciation of the client's organisation (88%) is valued more highly than their knowledge of it (74%)' (The Ridler Report, 2013: 4).

Looking at the results of the coaches in the research, it may be noteworthy that Coaches N, A and G had all previously worked as operators in the business and therefore had some grounding in the organisation, rather than being solely a learning and development professional. Coaches L and S did not have experience as operators within this industry.

Shuit (2005) speaks anecdotally when he shares the concern over the lack of grounding in basic business practise or even relevant experience:

One concern is that many coaches are not grounded in basic business experience. Or they may have the right experience but end up in the wrong situation, such as a psychotherapist giving strategic business advice (Shuit, 2005: 6).

The expectation is high for a coach with the relevant business experience and the desired psychological training. Three coaches who participated in the

research did have relevant experience as operators in the business that they were coaching in. However, the Ridler Report (2013) also found that 'the coach's knowledge of the industry sector in which the organisation operates is the lowest rated factor (68%)', consistent with the low rating achieved in the report two years prior (The Ridler Report, 2013: 4). Clutterbuck and Megginson (2010) denounce the claim that no contextual knowledge of the client's world is necessary.

Although the coach doesn't need to be a subject expert, it is essential on a credibility point, safety point and therefore an ethical point that some relevant grounding is necessary. Clutterbuck and Megginson (2010) believe that such experience is necessary to build rapport and demonstrate empathy, aside from being able to ask that significant question that stimulates insight; all valuable assets needed to build credibility.

The findings in the previous chapter identified properties that were important in an effective coach to support their credentials;

1. Trustworthy with confidential matters,
2. An objective person,
3. Understanding of the culture and operations of the company,
4. Not the line manager of the person being coached,
5. Has business credibility,
6. Is independent to the department.

It was inconclusive whether having coaching qualifications and relevant training in coaching is valuable in the effectiveness of coaching, thereby neither supporting nor challenging the research question relating to this matter. It was found that the coach is important to exploring and achieving the objectives set in the coaching, and those characteristics such as the coach being independent to the department, having credibility in a business context and trustworthy are also critical. Coach N had success despite her lack of training and qualifications, but it is also recognised that those coached by this coach was almost the smallest population to receive coaching.

Reflecting on the research question as to whether the credibility of the coach and having a trained and qualified coach makes a difference to the outcomes, it is

clear that some coaches did provide benefit regardless of the training and qualifications; although it should also be acknowledged that detriment may equally have been achieved potentially. Whilst being qualified does not exempt poor coaching practice or results, it may help to contain or limit the damage, especially when done through ignorant practice. Using coaches who have neither relevant training, nor sufficient qualifications to develop employees is an unregulated risk that some employers seem willing to accept; presumably under the misguided belief or ignorance that little damage is possible.

In this research there is support that having an independent coach was effective. This did not mean procuring coaching services from outside of the organisation but it did rely on specific training for the learning professionals conducting the coaching. Participants responded to a blend of styles used within the coaching session and perceived the coach as important to realising their objectives and thereby achieving success. Respondents appreciated an objective viewpoint and were able to discuss matters with the coach without ramifications that might have occurred had the line manager been coaching. The research question asking if coaches should be trained and qualified was not definitively supported but elements which did contribute to successful outcomes were identified and acknowledged from the research.

### **Achieving Business Outcomes**

The third research question asked if internal coaching had an impact on achieving business outcomes. The success was measured in the survey using a benchmark quantitative question which asked, on a scale of 1-10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') *how much do you feel that you have achieved the objectives set?* Discussing progress and achieving progress were also observed during the research. The data supports the research hypothesis that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. Participants perceived success in achieving business outcomes.

The Coaching Programme in the research comprised six coaching sessions, which were generally scheduled 3-4 weeks apart. The person being coached met with the same coach each time and was asked about their progress on the actions

agreed at the previous session. Discussing progress made on objectives at the following coaching session was seen as important by clients. When asked what clients got from the coaching experience and what they enjoyed, typically they highlighted that having time out from work activities on a regular basis to discuss concerns, being able to analyse behaviour and contribution to performance, and time for reflection and building confidence:

I particularly enjoyed reflecting back on each of the objectives I set myself and how I achieved them. The whole process gave me increased confidence in my abilities and made me face my worries head on (Participant 67.7 from the survey).

The positive results I saw after putting things into practice was the success of the experience. The sessions made me analyse myself, behaviour and contribution within the organisation and situations, but they also gave me the confidence and ability to slightly adapt myself. The time and reflection the coaching sessions provided were important to enable me to look at how I could make adaptations or in some situations accept the positive impact I'm making in the business (Participant 2.7 from the survey).

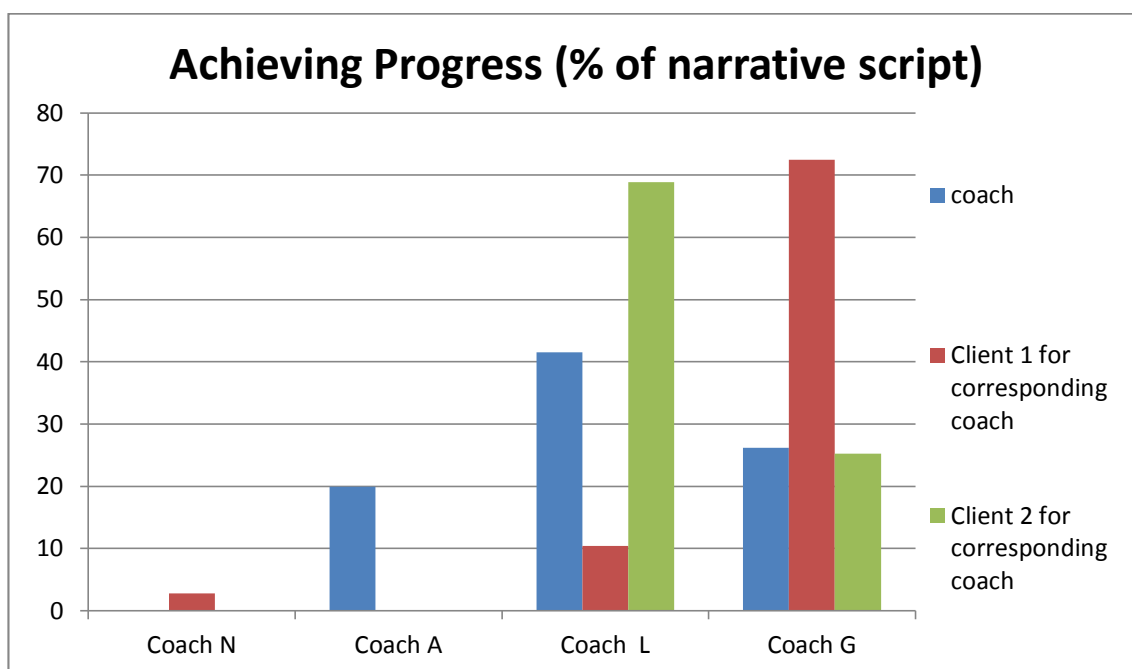
It made me reflect on how I manage myself when dealing with members of my team as well as people from other departments that I come into contact with and making sure that things are done in the correct manner (Participant 14.4 from the survey).

The process allowed me to take a step back and reflect on situations and circumstances, which then lead to a discussion of things I might have done differently (Participant 43.4 from the survey).

The analysis of the written narratives shows that in some cases, up to 72.48% of the overall script was related to achieving progress and discussing it with their coach. This is illustrated in Graph 6 (on page 180).

Three of the four coaches who participated in the Narrative stage of the research discussed achieving progress with their clients. The graph shows how important Participant 1 of Coach G and Participant 2 of Coach L felt that discussing progress was. Coach N did not include discussing progress in the narrative submitted and neither participant of Coach A included it in their narratives.

**Graph 6: Achieving Progress**



The graph illustrates that neither Coach N nor the Client 2 of Coach N mentioned 'achieving progress' in their narrative accounts but Coach N's Client 1 did. This is illustrated by the red marker for Client 1 of Coach N. Coach A did mention 'achieving progress' but neither of her corresponding clients did so the marker is only blue. Coach L and both of the clients of Coach L mentioned 'achieving progress' and likewise for Coach G.

In the survey, 97.5% of participants indicated that they felt it was important to discuss the progress made on objectives at the following session. Discussing the progress that the participants had made between sessions also enabled the coaches to hold them accountable for the progress:

As I had to go back and discuss progress each time it kept me focussed on achieving areas I had identified needed work on and now, 6 months later, I still refer back to the original booklet and objectives to make sure I am still doing things in my new way....  
(Participant 63.6 from the survey).

Coaching involves setting goals and goal achievement. In a study undertaken in 2006, 86% of the participants reported that the goals they had worked on during the coaching sessions were important or highly important (Scriffignano, 2011). Berard (2005) also advocates building on what was achieved at the previous

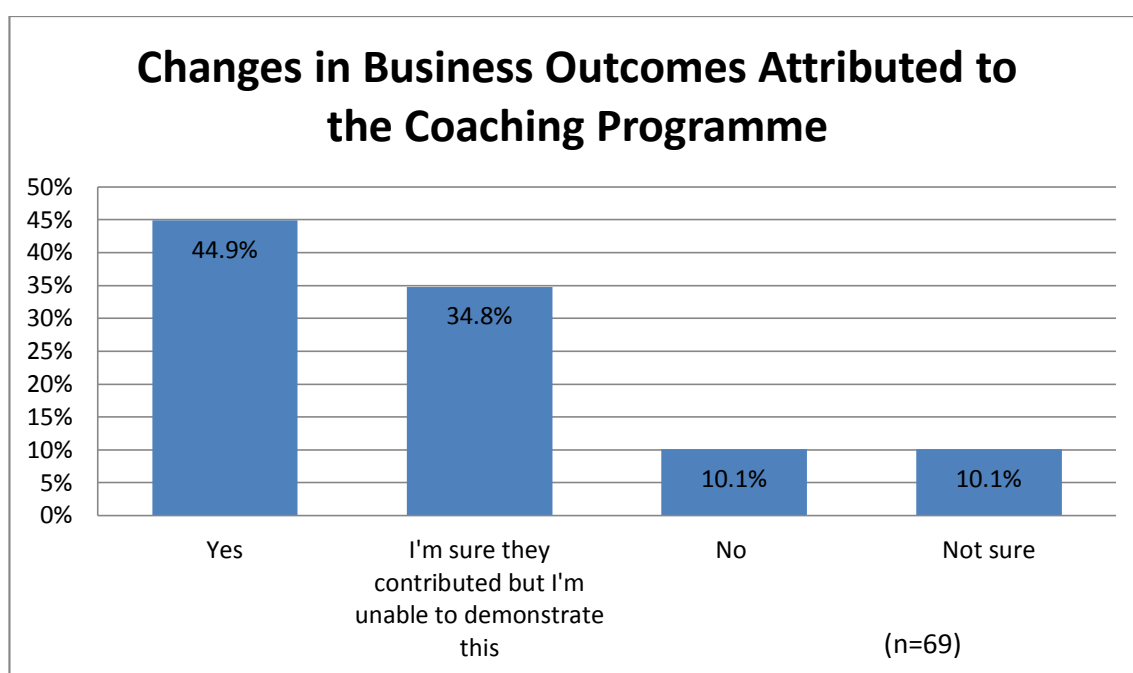


session so that the person being coached moves gradually towards achieving their goal. Grant *et al.* (2009) recommend this same process of evaluating progress made between coaching sessions:

After initial goal-setting, the coach's role is to help coachees move through the self-regulation cycle, by helping them develop action plans, and monitor and evaluate their progress between each coaching session (Grant *et al.*, 2009: 399).

During the coaching sessions the coaches asked the participants how much progress had been made since the last session. The participants in the survey found this challenge from the coach beneficial.

**Graph 7:** Perceived Changes in Business Outcomes



This emphasised the accountability of the client for progress and implementation. Only 7 survey respondents said that they had not seen changes that they could attribute to the coaching programme (n=69). This represented 10.1% of the respondents. The responses to this question are illustrated above in Graph 7: Perceived Changes in Business Outcomes.

The 31 respondents who had answered yes to the survey question above were also asked to describe the business outcomes. Increased productivity was mentioned in many of the accounts:

I was able to make a compelling case for making some design tweaks to the three newspapers. I gave a presentation to the three editors and was fully prepared for any obstacles or queries that arose during the discussion. The changes have now been implemented and that has had a positive effect not only on my team, but also on the appearance of the paper (Participant 19.14 from the survey).

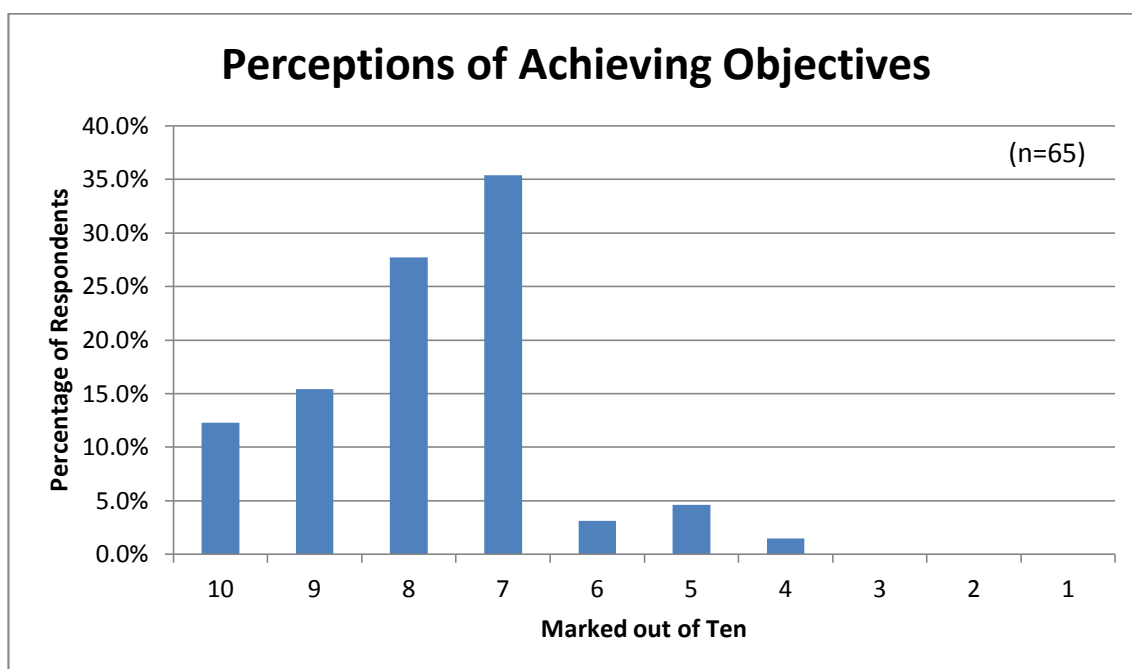
It's hard this, as a lot of my objectives were based around giving staff a voice and improving my relationship with them. As part of that process, we've changed working practices and productivity has increased (Participant 7.14 from the survey).

A great example is last year I headed up a supplement which needed to involve all Sales Teams and departments ie production. We made 11k. This year I have headed up the same supp in a tougher market place but we have achieved 23k. Through my coaching sessions I have worked on my awareness of communicating and involving all departments so all deadlines were met which in turn kept business costs down and due to improved planning great amount of revenue secured (Participant 74.14 from the survey).

To get a quantitative response about the success of the coaching, respondents were asked to rate their achievements on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally'). This quantitative question was used as the principle or benchmark question when analysing the results, as it demonstrated a quantitative measure of success. Graph 8: Achieved Objectives (on page 183), illustrates the responses given when participants were asked to mark achieving their objectives out of ten.

The majority of respondents (35.4%) scored their achievements at 7 out of 10. Eight people (12.3%) reported a maximum score of 10. No one responded with a score of less than 4, and only 6 people scored less than 7. Fifty nine people (90.8%) felt that they had achieved their objectives by scoring 7 or above.

**Graph 8: Achieved Objectives**



The following testimonials exhibit some of the achievements they have accomplished:

I was able to give her positive reinforcement as she achieved each of the goals she set herself and felt rewarded by her obvious gain in self-confidence (Coach 4, from narrative 11).

I am wasting less time thanks to the coaching programme, which has encouraged me to delegate better and therefore help the team work more effectively (Participant 52.14 from the survey).

In terms of my own experience, my coaching focused specifically in the way I deal with others. This will not show in sales, profit, wastage or turnover of people, but has affected the way people react to me, the way I react to them and the atmosphere of the workplace (Participant 56.14 from the survey).

There have been a number of changes in the way the team is working which came about through focusing on what needed to be done through the programme. Not all targets have been met but there have been some positive outcomes (Participant 30.14 from the survey).

My objectives were about changing the way I work to help raise the profile of my department and myself within the business. While there is no tangible evidence to support this, I think colleagues would say things are certainly starting to improve (Participant 72.14 from the survey).

The analysis shows that there was a strong perception of association between the coaching sessions and achieving objectives which contributed to realising business outcomes. There is clear evidence that the coaching had a perceived positive impact on performance.

It was found that discussing progress at the coaching sessions and achieving progress on the objectives clients set was important in the perceived success of the internal coaching. This is supported by the qualitative data from the narratives and the survey and from the quantitative data gathered. Although a benchmark question was used to quantify this outcome, there may be less tangible outcomes that still impact on performance but may not be evident in this data.

Most evidence about the impact of coaching focuses on external coaches (CIPD, 2012) rather than internal coaching. Although the evidence was weak studies have consistently found a positive relationship between coaching and performance but recent research is providing a more substantial grounding (Bozer and Sarros, 2012). The CIPD (2012) also supports more evidence-based research in this area and suggests business metrics with which to 'build reliable and valid facts' (7) but does recognise that practitioners accept coaching as a positive intervention. The CIPD recommend 'linking coaching assignments with key organisational data and metrics' to demonstrate how coaching works and its success (CIPD, 2012: 13).

### **Impact on Performance**

The analysis of the findings also identified there were other elements affected by the internal coaching that would achieve business outcomes by impacting on performance. Having a positive experience of internal coaching, increasing confidence, and feeling that the coaching offered some therapeutic value could be perceived as by-products of the coaching, but were identified as having contributed to impacting on performance through improving engagement. This data supported the final research question that coaching had an impact on achieving business outcomes.

Often, in coaching, outcomes are behavioural (Passmore, 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003; Neenan and Palmer, 2001) and not always tangible. In the questionnaire,

the participants were asked to rate how well they felt they had achieved their outcomes. This was a principle question because it allowed the answer to reflect how effective respondents perceived the internal coaching and therefore how successful they felt the coaching was.

Coaching is primarily undertaken to improve performance in the workplace through behavioural change (Grant *et al.*, 2009; CIPD, 2008; Passmore, 2007; Passmore and Gibbes, 2007). Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang and Fernandes (2008) deduce from the research undertaken by Huselid (1995) that coaching facilitates engagement, which in turn increases productivity. Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997) demonstrated in their research that a combination of coaching and training can increase productivity by 88%, compared to the 22% increase in productivity generated by training alone. Kombarakaran *et al.* (2008) conclude from their own study that coaching can have positive outcomes for both the individuals involved and the organisation.

Fifty percent of the participants who responded to the survey question felt that the coaching experience was 'extremely positive', and 94.7% of respondents felt that the experience was either 'positive' or 'extremely positive' (n=76). Only 4 people gave a neutral response and no one gave a negative reply. The respondents were also asked to justify why they had given such responses; the following are just some examples:

The experience had many positive effects on how I think and act in situations, which I personally put into practice and saw great benefit and results from doing so (Participant 2.6 from the survey. Rated extremely positive).

Because it challenged me to examine the way I approach both my role and how I interact with colleagues resulting in positive changes to the way that I do things (Participant 14.6 from the survey. Rated extremely positive).

It has been, overall, a positive experience. There have been frustrations in that the process has highlighted some of the flaws in our team and some of the progress which had started to be made has stalled but the coaching has allowed me to more clearly see how progress can be achieved (Participant 30.6 from the survey. Rated positive).

The outcome of the coaching has been very positive increasing my confidence both in the working environment and in my personal life as well (Participant 39.6 from the survey. Rated extremely positive).

The sessions made me feel more positive in my role and to realise that I could make a difference to the way we all work and make changes for the better (Participant 40.6 from the survey. Rated positive).

It all went according to plan which for me made it a positive experience (Participant 62.6 from the survey. Rated positive).

I took a great deal from all the sessions and learnt a lot about myself and what my peers and colleagues thought about me. It was a very positive experience that I thoroughly enjoyed (Participant 67.6 from the survey. Rated extremely positive).

Having a positive experience is also seen by the client as being important. Consultant, co-author, and business writer, Altman (2007), although writing from an experience perspective, insists that the coach's role is to build confidence in order to provide motivation, enhance skills and refine performance. By providing a positive experience the coaching becomes more rewarding both for the coach and the client. The qualitative comments in both the narratives and the survey, and the quantitative results in the survey advocated a strong relationship in a positive experience contributing to a successful outcome for coaching.

Participants in coaching need to feel that they have had a positive experience, whether it's because they like to be accountable for progress, use the coach as a sounding board or a fresh mind (Browne *et al.*, 2008; Altman, 2007; Snyder, 1995), enjoy the therapeutic value that coaching brings (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Smither, 2011, Gray, 2011), or just like to be challenged about their behaviour. Marshall (2011) adds that coaching is one of the few activities in busy times where people can release the stresses and pressures constructively and achieve progress:

Coaching is also one of the few places where managers can make use of a sounding board away from the everyday pressures of business life. Coaching can create a place where you think calmly. And when you are calm, you are more creative and make better decisions (Marshall, 2011: 2).

Sometimes being able to solve a problem by discussing it with another person provides the release that is required to reduce the stress (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Passmore and Gibbes, 2007). Finding time to do that in a generally busy climate can be harder if time is not consciously put aside for development activities, such as coaching.

Matthews (2010) describes the positive experience of coaching as engaging the client in meaningful and motivating conversations; although this description may not go far enough to fully describe the problem resolution that coaching ultimately seeks. This experience, he continues is the role of a manager; to engage both hearts and minds of the people they employ.

Coaching has an important impact on increasing confidence (Grant *et al.*, 2010) and self-awareness for clients and offers reported therapeutic qualities (CIPD, 2012; Smither, 2011), although the coaching sessions should not necessarily be recognised as therapy or psychotherapy (Gray, 2011).

The following extract from a narrative from the research in the media organisation illustrates how a client describes coaching positively as therapy but not necessarily regarded as psychotherapy. The client is quite descriptive around the coach trying to help the person increase their awareness and understand the situation, looking at it from different angles. The narrator concludes the account:

I felt I'd just had an hour of 'therapy'. Everything we discussed was useful, productive and really got me thinking. The session confirmed that the specific areas of focus are indeed right and by having a coaching session gets me thinking about how I am and the way I think and feel (Client from narrative 1).

Evidence supports the perception of therapeutic value in coaching in the qualitative survey data from the research in the media organisation. A therapeutic relationship has been recognised to have value by other researchers also:

Common factors such as empathy, warmth, and the therapeutic relationship have been shown to correlate more highly with client outcome than specialized treatment interventions (Lambert and Barley, 2002 in Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Kilburg (2004) agrees that coaching can have therapeutic values, but is also clear to distinguish it from psychotherapy:

Let me say here to be clear, I believe that coaching can have therapeutic value for our executive clients. However, coaching is not, and should not be considered a form of psychotherapeutic intervention (Kilburg, 2004: 260).

Bozer and Sarros (2012) differentiate coaching from therapy but recognise that most definitions of coaching assume an absence of serious mental health problems in the client. Coaching has therapeutic value but Kilburg rejects the thinking that it can be considered a holistic solution to healing the psyche. Many clients involved in this research also recognised the therapeutic value of coaching:

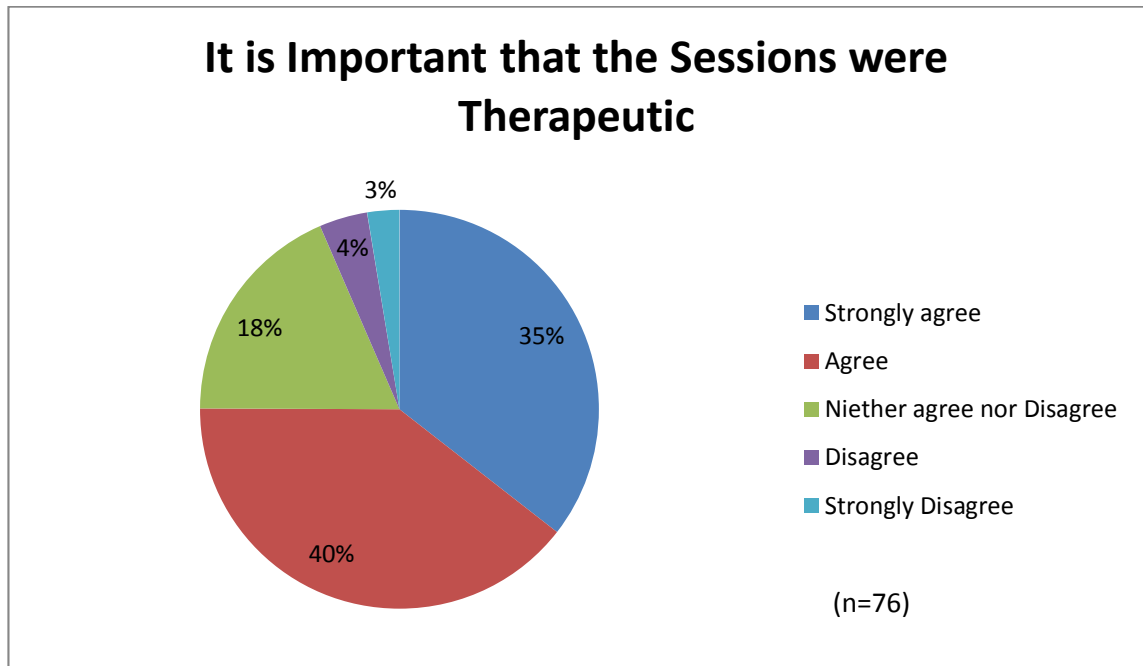
It was incredibly therapeutic but beyond that, my coach challenged me to reason things through, without being too overbearing (Participant 19.6 from the survey).

I found it to be very therapeutic to discuss issues with an independent person and to get a different perspective on certain ways of dealing situations, particularly when dealing with members of staff and issues concerning them (Participant 69.6 from the survey).

In the survey, 75% of respondents responded positively when asked if they felt it was important that the sessions were therapeutic. Graph 9 on page 189 shows the response rates to the question of whether it was important that the sessions were therapeutic. Seventy six participants responded to this question.



**Graph 9: Measuring the Importance of Therapeutic Sessions**



The qualitative comments in both the narratives and the survey, and the quantitative results in the survey advocated a strong relationship in both a positive experience and therapeutic attributes contributing to a successful outcome for coaching.

Many of the coaching participants also reported an increase in confidence as a result of the coaching. In the survey, 55 respondents (71.5%) of the 77 who answered the question said their confidence had increased as a result of the coaching. This is illustrated in Graph 10, shown on page 190 below.

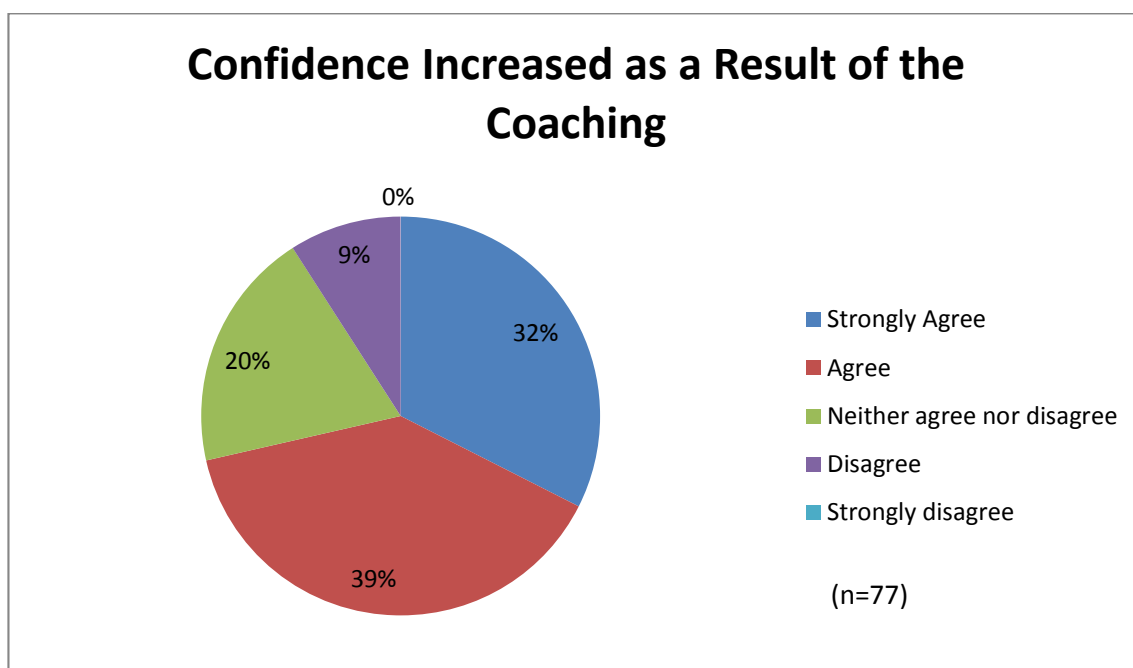
Fischer and Beimers (2009) also reported increased levels of confidence amongst their executive directors (ED), displayed to all levels of management:

Respondents repeatedly stated that coaching enhanced the executives' level of confidence in their ability to perform the necessary tasks and address challenges facing an ED (Fischer and Beimers, 2009: 517).

From their research, Fischer and Beimers (2009) concluded that many directors who had received the coaching showed a moderate or large improvement in confidence.

**Graph 10:** Survey Responses Relating Increased Confidence to Coaching

71% agreed that their confidence had increased as a result of the coaching. This is illustrated by the blue and red segments in the chart.



The qualitative comments supporting this concept are numerous:

After being doubtful about the coaching at the beginning, (the coach) has worked her magic and I feel I am a different news editor to the one I was before. I have accepted that I panic, have learnt how to deal with that, and have become a lot more confident in what I do. I still have a long way to go, but feel I now have the ability to get there and am definitely up for any challenge along the way (Client, from narrative 10).

By the end of the programme, her relationship with xxxxx had improved dramatically and she was far more confident about her role in the Newsroom (Coach 4, from narrative 11).

Also my confidence has improved therefore I feel I am able to deal with situations in a better way to achieve results (Participant 40.14 from the survey).

My confidence is a lot higher than it used to be and I feel confident about certain challenges than I possibly would have felt in the past (Participant 59.14 from the survey).

Overall, I now feel more empowered to do my job and with more confidence. I am taking more risks rather than just sitting back and hiding away because I am unsure (Client, from narrative 10).

By providing a positive and therapeutic experience a coach can increase a client's confidence. This approach has shown to be effective in increasing engagement and therefore increasing performance. There is both qualitative and quantitative data to support the finding that these behaviours are effective in a successful internal coaching programme.

## **Summary**

Evidence that coaching is having a positive impact on performance is increasing (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007) but remains relatively weak (Bozer and Sarros, 2012). Passmore and Gibbes (2007) report on research, specifically providing feedback interventions; proposing that, in just over 30% of cases in a meta-research of 600 studies, feedback was followed by a decrease in performance, rather than the expected increase. They continue that providing feedback to individuals should be handled cautiously by coaches, who often see this as a key tool in developing self-awareness. Some of the decrease in performance may be attributed to demotivation and decrease in confidence generated in the way the interventions are conducted and feedback is given.

Some of the behaviour changes that were reported in the narratives include being more confident, increased delegation, increased organisation, better communication through meetings, implementing different ways of working and improved motivation. Improving these will engage clients and increase performance:

I also sit back a lot more; I'm there when needed but 'interfere' less on a day to day basis, just stepping in to sign things off at the end of the day (Client, from narrative 6).

I have demonstrated a change in behaviour by combining my daily news editing work with the development of a broader newsroom strategy and direction (Client, from narrative 9).

I realised that I could do them (the rotas) in a more organised way. I now diary myself to do the rotas at least two weeks before they need to be done and actually take myself out of the newsroom for an hour to do at least six weeks of them. I then email them out and make it clear to the reporters that this is the final draft, and if they've not let me know about anything beforehand then it is then down to them to change their shifts between them. This seems to have worked as the last time I did them I had no complaints. I've realised I was trying to please too many people instead of having the confidence to take absolute control of them, and put the responsibility back onto the reporters (Client, from narrative 10).

It also had the effect of motivating her, or 'giving me a kick up the backside' in her words and after only two (coaching) meetings people were commenting on the change in behaviour. Her Editor said 'she has the fire back in her belly for the job' (Coach 4 from narrative 11).

I have always been nervous when dealing with xxxx, but during this coaching I have discussed ways in which to talk to him when I feel he has done something unacceptable and also gained confidence by actually doing it. Beforehand I would have shied away from any sort of confrontation with him, but now I feel more able to handle that type of situation (Client from narrative 10).

This research has presented original empirical data related to a programme of Internal coaching undertaken in a media organisation and has extended the knowledge-base in internal coaching. It has shown that development professionals possessing varying training and experience in coaching, but with the appropriate aptitude and application, can provide an effective internal coaching practice to achieve progress and successful outcomes. The research collected perceptions of internal coaching in practice, by those who received it. It gathered and observed information on how successful and effective coaching, over an 18 month period was perceived.

This real-time research provides a snapshot of organisational learning professionals undertaking internal coaching; the majority of whom had received only a foundation level of training and experience in coaching. All the coaches were involved in an intense internal programme of coaching managers at all levels throughout the business over the eighteen month period. The qualifications and experience of the coaches involved in the programme were not published to the clients. This research observed four internal non-qualified and relatively untrained coaches and one internal experienced coach practitioner. As outlined

in the Introduction chapter, the untrained coaches only received instruction and input on how to administer the *Coaching* Programme; no previous training in coaching had been undertaken by them. Few empirical studies have focused on data gathered from internal coaching activities undertaken by generic learning and development professionals, rather than qualified external professional coaches or designated internal coaches.

## **Practice and Research**

The following suggestions are presented to encourage further research in this area of coaching. The objectives of the research could be repeated, using qualified, experienced and independent coaches who are not affiliated to the same organisation as the clients. This would identify if the elements that were seen as effective in this research are common to those when internal coaching is done by qualified or more established coaches. The data used in this research is limited to the perceptions of coaches and their clients. Future research might also obtain data from an observational perspective to ensure reliability of findings; collected from the line managers and subordinates of those receiving coaching. This would also triangulate the findings and establish the impact and effectiveness in the workplace.

These studies might employ larger samples since the coaching within the business continues to be available for employees. It may also be valuable to agree a consistent approach amongst the coaches, as experienced, trained or qualified coaches may have an affiliation to a particular approach or model. The findings of this research remain largely unverified and inherently there is an opportunity for future research to test the validity of the accepted hypotheses:

The benefits of coaching research for coaching practitioners is to help us better understand which interventions work and when. Many coaching psychologists already have an intuitive feel for what works and when, but coaching research provides the evidence for our practices (Passmore and Gibbes, 2007: 126).

With this in mind, further research should be done in this field as the internal coaching arena expands and the number of practitioners increases respectively. Although Passmore and Gibbes (2007) speak from a psychological stance, such

findings would be beneficial for all practising coaches, arguably more so for those with less experience, qualifications or training.

The longer-term impact and benefits have not been evaluated in this research. It would be beneficial to see which factors from the internal coaching process have influenced sustained coaching outcomes and what actions and behaviours have been transferred and integrated into work systems and behaviours. Future studies could explore the impact of internal coaching at both individual and organisational levels (Grant *et al.*, 2009). This would further corroborate the findings of practitioners' experience that coaching really works (Kombarakaran, *et al.*, 2008).

Research done by Bono *et al.* (2009) began identifying key coaching competencies. They argued that an important area for future research would be to determine what knowledge, skills and abilities coaches must have to be effective. Further work has been done on this and it is becoming commonplace for professional bodies offer a framework of competencies (Association for Coaching, 2012; European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2009) for developing coaches. These frameworks not only enable coaches to prepare themselves as far as their continuous personal development but would also provide invaluable information for establishments providing training and development for coaches. It is suggested that this has improved the quality and consistency of training offered and inherently, the coaching provided to clients. Furthermore, research into the internal coaches' behaviours that facilitate motivation, insight and engagement would also be instrumental and invaluable. Further research into the internal coaching process would also support and validate the information elicited in this research.

As internal coaching continues to increase in popularity and practise, adherence or at least awareness to clear professional guidelines and standards is required (Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008). It is anticipated that if coaching becomes regulated it will encourage practitioners to behave ethically to ensure that clients are not harmed, nor experience detriment but regulation will only protect those who adhere to the guidelines and will not cover those who chose to practise outside of its range. An alternative view is that regulation might 'preach to the converted'

and only include those who already practise with a conscience anyway; excluding those who currently practise against the grain or in ignorance. Further empirical studies into the practices and effectiveness of coaches will enable professionals to provide quality coaching to ensure that both individual and organisation will benefit from realising anticipated outcomes, increase productivity, motivation and engagement.

### **Limitations of the Research**

This research has several limitations, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

1. The client and coaches were all from one organisation, which limits the generalisation to other organisations as there may be unique factors related to this organisation (in the media industry). The coaches were also internal employees and had received little formal training in coaching and most had no qualifications and negligible experience in coaching. There is limited detail on the nature of the coaching models used by each coach. This makes it more difficult to place the approach used and the consistency of approach. The research shows that only some of the elements within the process were effective.
2. The number of participants involved within this research came from a relatively small population, which makes it more difficult to show noteworthy changes (Moen and Skaalvik, 2009): 12 narratives from 9 participants, and 80 respondents of the survey but only 65 completed the principle benchmark question. There were only five internal coaches involved in coaching on this programme; one being the researcher. This then limited the number of narratives available from coaches in the first stage of the research. The researcher had little control over the size of respondents for each coach, meaning that the size of responses from each coach's participants is inconsistent. These factors may have had an influence on the results; e.g. Coach N coached only 10.8% of the population.

3. Due to the nature of narrative inquiry, it relies on memory recall and is time consuming for the narrator to capture and articulate appropriately. Related to this is the quality of the narrative produced and whether it accurately captures events, emotions and opinions. The narrator chooses which aspects of the events they wish to convey and what to omit. Unlike an interview, the reviewer can only take from the passage what is written; without further interrogation or clarification from the originator. The interrogation of narrative reviews can also be subject to reviewer biases (Polit and Beck, 2006) as what is meaningful depends on what the researcher wants to know and what the narrator wants to tell (Den Outer, 2010), making it 'only a "sample of reality"' (Czarniawska, 2004 in Den Outer, 2010: 101). Analysis of narratives is such that the narrative cannot be broken down into separate parts or portions; and exists only in their entirety. Although interviewing the participants several times over a longer period would arguably have provided a better quality of information, but possibly a different perspective, it would have been more time consuming and impractical. In the survey, some questions were omitted; 15 respondents did not complete the principle question which meant that their responses to the other questions could not be considered as it would have skewed the results.
4. Some of the participants had been coached by the researcher although these responses were only included in the survey and not the narratives. This may allow for more biased responses from those participants who had a positive experience with the researcher-coach and wanted to demonstrate gratitude for the experience.
5. The survey population (n=80) of participants comprised 70% managers, 7.2% non-managers, 11.6% team leaders, 14.5% heads of department, 4.3% regional managers, 1.4% senior managers. Experiences and expectations from the respondents might therefore vary compared to their expectations,



tainting their opinions of the coaching they received. Being able to select information purely from one management level population might have shown a more consistent response.

6. The research relies on retrospective self-report data in both stages of the research, which is susceptible to recall issues (Scriffignano, 2011; Gray, Ekinci, and Goregaokar, 2011; Fischer and Beimers, 2009); and short term data collection. Use of self-report questionnaires and narratives are known for response bias (Vogel, 2012; Gray *et al.*, 2011; Evers *et al.*, 2006) and may present an overly favourable view of the programme, presenting a more positive interpretation. The research covers a period of approximately 18 months and so does not consider the longer-term effectiveness of the internal coaching programme. The information gathered also relies on the self-reporting data from the participants; no direct measures or observations other than those of the coaches and people being coached were included i.e. no information from the managers of the participants was collected.

Each of these limitations could be addressed in subsequent studies that seek to minimise their effects.

## Conclusion

### Summary of the Research

This research focused on the coaching practices within a media organisation. It observed five employed learning and development specialists who were asked to conduct internal coaching sessions across three regions of the business between 2009 and 2011. Important key themes and activities of internal coaching were identified from twelve narratives using NVivo software and analysis of the accounts. Narratives were received from coaches and clients describing the same session. The key activities were recognised by the percentage of script that was written in each narrative. A questionnaire was designed based on the activities. The survey of 135 clients who had participated in the Coaching Programme was analysed and important and valued aspects of the internal coaching were found. The multi-method research drew from qualitative and quantitative data to highlight other aspects which were deemed important in the internal coaching.

When evaluating the outcomes of the internal Coaching Programme, three problems were identified:

1. The coaches undertaking the coaching sessions were Learning and Development professionals who had received only two days of training on coaching and the administrative process of the Coaching Programme. Training was presented by an external coach who provided some insight into coaching development. Four of the five internal coaches had neither qualifications nor experience in conducting coaching sessions and had been asked to coach clients as part of their day-to-day remit.
2. There was a lack of tangible benchmarks to demonstrate the clients' development. Clients were encouraged to use a 360° instrument to gather feedback and opinions on their behaviour and performance prior to the coaching sessions. A report of the feedback gathered was given to the internal coaches who presented and discussed it with the respective client. Coaching

could focus on the development identified through the reports if the clients so wished. The training for the coaches to present this information was included within the two days mentioned above.

3. Professional bodies for learning and development professionals and coaching practitioners publish standards of practice and promote best practice through competence frameworks. However, these were not included in the training provided by the organisation and attention was not drawn to them. It was therefore feasible that the standard of coaching by the internal coaches was inconsistent and individualised to the context, situation and client using the internal coaches' own intuition and experience.

The three identified problems were not recognised by the business leaders who promoted the Coaching Programme. This information was assembled from the observations during the research.

The aim of the research was to establish if internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. The amount of training received by the internal coaches was minimal and potentially could have led to detriment to clients and the organisation. No reported incidents or harm were identified during the research but there was a risk of both psychological and emotional damage. The fact that the potential danger of allowing poorly trained and ill-equipped internal coaches to develop clients did not materialise was likely down to chance rather than management or elimination of the risks.

The absence of a framework of standard competences presented to the internal coaches to benchmark practices meant that approaches could differ by each coach. Although coaching should be tailored to the context, client and situation there were no parameters set for the inexperienced internal coaches to ensure that boundaries were not crossed and the potential for further harm to clients was not recognised.

The research observed the practices of internal coaches and their impact on the development of clients and business outcomes. Much of the empirical data

presented in the narratives was subjective accounts and qualitative feedback. The impact on business outcomes was reliant on mainly intangible measures as few tangible objectives were identified by the clients or their respective internal coaches during the initial coaching sessions. Many clients wrote about their perceived success in the qualitative data but a lack of tangible benchmarks to demonstrate the success meant that these could not be supported by business metrics.

Three research questions were formulated:

- Does the coaching style applied within an internal coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
- Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of internal coaching?
- Does internal coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

The research found that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. The internal coach was important to the success of the coaching and some aspects of the coaches' style and role were strongly attributed to the success. A blend of coaching, mentoring and instructional techniques was found to be favourable with the clients achieving successful outcomes.

Other aspects which supported positive results as a result of the internal coaching were holding the client accountable for agreed actions, encouraging the client to lead or dictate the direction of the session, challenging the client and making them think differently, allowing them time to reflect and have realisation moments.

It was inconclusive as to whether specific qualifications were conditional to achieving the results but it was advocated that the coach should provide an objective viewpoint. The coach should have credibility by understanding the culture and operations within the organisation. It was also evident that a coach who is independent of the client's department and does not line manage the client is preferred.

The research found that clients perceived that the internal coaching did support them in achieving business outcomes and had a positive impact on performance. Discussing progress and achievements at sessions was encouraged by the clients, who found the session had therapeutic value. The clients also felt the experience was positive and their confidence increased.

The results of the data analysis showed that internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes. Some of the aspects of internal coaching have been recognised as important due to the support of both qualitative and quantitative data from the narratives and survey.

This final section presents recommendations for internal coaching practice and considerations for developing internal coaches. The recommendations support the optimisation of the development opportunity for the client, acknowledging that pursuing relevant competence and experience for the coach should always be encouraged.

### **Recommendations from the Research**

The research sought to explore coaching and establish if internal coaching had contributed to a positive impact on business outcomes; providing a deeper level of understanding of coaching by exploring the experiences of internal coaches and their clients. As individual coaching is traditionally a confidential and private affair between the coach and the client, it can be very difficult to articulate what 'good' looks like and isolate what is effective in practice. From the information collected, clients summarised coaching as:

...an exploratory process, supporting and guiding people to achieve their own goals and improve performance or realise a resolution  
(Summarised from participants' survey contributions).

The following conclusions are drawn from this empirical research in the responses to the questions presented, to provide some guidance in the effective elements experienced through coaching in a media organisation.

Research question 1: Does the coaching style applied within an internal coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?

- A customised blend of styles within the coaching sessions, including mentoring and coaching is effective in achieving coaching objectives.
- The client is responsible for the direction and agenda of the session.
- The sessions are challenging and inspire the client to think differently.
- The client has time to reflect during and between the sessions so that realisation moments are experienced.
- The client is held accountable for progress.

**Recommendation 1: Internal coaches should include a blend of appropriate styles to obtain positive results in internal coaching. The role of the internal coach is important to create conditions listed above to obtain positive results in internal coaching.**

Research question 2: Does having a trained and qualified internal coach make a difference to the outcomes of coaching?

- The internal coach is a critical element to the success of the coaching. Important coach characteristics that promote success are;
  - trustworthiness with confidential matters,
  - objectivity,
  - ability to understand the culture and operations of the company,
  - not being the line manager of the client,
  - having business credibility,
  - being independent of the client's department.

**Recommendation 2: Although having qualifications and training is not conditional to positive outcomes in coaching, the internal coach should satisfy the six criteria listed above.**

Research question 3: Does internal coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

Internal coaching can have a positive impact on both performance and on achieving business outcomes. The following guidelines should be considered in order to create conducive conditions for coaching:

- Objectives should be set and solutions to them explored in the session.
- The coach facilitates the discussion on the progress made between the sessions.
- Confidence is nurtured in the client.

**Recommendation 3: The internal coach should facilitate the discussion on achievement and progress made between the sessions so that confidence of the client increases.**

Although these findings from this research do not support the argument that coaches require specialised coaching or psychology training and accredited qualifications to be effective, it does support the blended style, coach characteristics and attributes mentioned above.

### **Summary and Final Comments**

Learning and development professionals who were practicing as internal coaches participated in the research, having received just 2 days of training around the procedures and administration of the Coaching Programme. One of the internal coaches involved had received accredited training and experience as a practicing coach. Many recent empirical studies focused on coaching done by external coaches (Bozer and Sarros, 2012; Vogel, 2012; Du Toit and Reissner, 2012); Gray *et al.*, 2011; Scriffignano, 2011; Bono *et al.*, 2009; Grant *et al.*, 2008; Kombarakaran *et al.*, 2008; Evers *et al.*, 2006). More recently research has focused on internal coaching (St John-Brooks, 2014; The Ridler Report, 2013; Sherpa Coaching, 2013; ICF, 2013; Pak Tee Ng, 2012) and a growing evidence base is being formed (CIPD, 2012).

The research observed by Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) on a United Kingdom Finance organisation did use 3 internal coaches from the organisation studied; but information on their qualifications, experience and credentials is not given and the researcher had no control over characteristics of coaching clients, types of coaching used, nor the duration of the coaching. Similarly, the inquiry undertaken by De Haan, Bertie, Day, and Sills (2010) focused on responses from people who had received coaching, but did not qualify the coaches used by the respondents

by establishing their background, qualifications or experience of coaching practice.

Some published studies have utilised non-accredited internal resources (Mukherjee, 2012; Ng, 2012; Fischer and Beimers, 2009) usually senior managers or directors with extensive business experience, to coach more junior people within the organisation. Few have reported to have used learning and development professionals with scarcely any training in coaching to practice at all management levels throughout the business, including the most senior. The International Coach Federation (ICF) (2013) did report that 'a few organizations' had internal coaches with minimal training ('a couple of days or even less') and qualifications and a minority of organisations had a bank of internal coaches who had been through an accredited training programme (ICF, 2013: 9).

It was found that the coach was important to the success of internal coaching. The four internal coaches with little training and no accreditation provided coaching that was perceived as effective and successful by the participants; indicating that accreditation and qualifications are not critical to successful coaching. This finding was also supported by the work undertaken by Bono *et al.* (2009) who also concluded that relying on qualifications and training alone to source an effective coach has little value as it 'provides limited information about a coach's practices' (394).



## **Personal Reflections about Coaching and Conducting the Research**

This research was started in January 2009. The following section describes what has been learned both about the practice of internal coaching and whilst undertaking the research.

### **About Internal Coaching –**

As a practising coach the information and insight into coaching practice has provided me with knowledge and understanding that I would not otherwise have accessed; and certainly not in the depth and abundance that has been evident. I now have experience of coaching as an external and internal coach in various roles and organisations I have worked with and in. This foundation of information has provided a platform to enhance both my confidence and skill set when practising in organisations. This has expedited the evolution of my perceptions of coaching and helped define how I practise.

Reflecting on my own behaviour and practice has challenged me to improve and look at techniques differently, without prejudice or immediate rejection that different approaches and styles can be used in coaching. Prior to the research, I believed that a pure coaching style approach was the most effective. The findings have influenced the way I approach coaching and encouraged me to use alternative techniques; ultimately focusing on the client and facilitating them to achieve their objectives.

The findings gave me more confidence that my style wasn't *wrong*, as far as coaching was concerned. I've spoken to many (internal and external) coaches who seem extremely protective about their practice and who are reluctant to be observed, for fear of being judged or in case others claim their methods are not 'coaching'. Keeping in mind that a blend of styles is acceptable and effective enables the coach to grow in confidence realising that they do conform to what coaching is.

I've also realised that coaching is about mental development; exploring assumptions and insights of how people process and interpret the world. Developing sensitivity to other people's views and opinions enables the coach to

accept their perceptions of events. 'Coaching is about giving people the courage to learn' (Drake, 2011: 151).

Coaching is a phrase used by learning and development professionals to describe a type of intervention. However, some practitioners use the word to envelope activities which they believe are used to develop business operators but their understanding of it may be adrift of that of the specialist. I have come to realise that coaching uses specialised, jargon terminology. Definitions of learning and development interventions are only agreed upon, understood and shared by a minority of specialists within the business context. I have learned that when managers wish to procure coaching it is wise to agree in which direction the person wishes to travel and to discuss the vehicle that might be deployed for that journey. This ensures that what the manager envisions matches the expectations and meets the requirements of the task in hand.

This exploration through the coaching literature and the development of my knowledge in coaching has stimulated my appetite to continue my own development, specifically in psychological development. My intention is to further my qualification in achieving a Master's degree in Developmental Psychology on completion of this programme of research.

### **Through Conducting the Research –**

Conducting the empirical research has enhanced my experience and skill set of research implementation. It also raised my profile within the organisation, created a legacy on my departure and improved my network with senior managers who requested information regarding the findings and conclusions. Through reflection, it is useful to identify areas for improvement during future ventures.

Disseminating information about the research and findings throughout the duration has exposed me to challenges I might otherwise have been sheltered from. Presenting the findings at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference in London in September 2011 was regarded as an important personal achievement; but it also presented the opportunity to rationalise the information and explore challenges from other researchers or subject matter experts in the audience.

I continue to disseminate the findings through various projects that I become involved in. I have written programmes incorporating research skills for clients and integrated coaching competence in a number of products requested by clients. Through researching internal coaching to improve performance in the media industry, I have been exposed to a rich bank of empirical and prescribed literature. I have used this information to complement my own practice and, through reflection and discovery, have enhanced the effectiveness of techniques and approaches I have used.

### **The Impact the Research has had on Practice or on Others**

A strategy was deployed to present ideas to a relevant audience with a view to them challenging ideas and recommendations presented. This has led to quite difficult and uncomfortable situations from time to time as I recognise gaps in my own knowledge highlighted from challenging questions from the audience. The following summarises the chronological dissemination strategy developed, often organically, to facilitate my own understanding of the research; by satisfying inquisitive and demanding challenges from others; academics, practitioners and specialists.

- **Oxford Brookes University – Ed.D. Colloquium. ‘National and International Perspectives on Education’. (28<sup>th</sup> June 2014)**

Title: Cowboy Coaching: Critical reflections on success and failure in workplace coaching

The presentation was fully booked on arrival at the venue. Great interest was shown by the audience, including approval from coach practitioners who found the information very interesting. Questions were received over the use of NVivo software and on the reliability assurance of the data. This workshop was attended by current UK and International EdD students, programme leaders, and the key note speaker, Professor Marlene Morrison. Feedback received following the conference was that the presentation was both ‘interesting and well delivered’ (conference organiser).

- **University of Derby 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Professional Conference 'Professionalism and Knowledge'. (13<sup>th</sup> May 2014)**

Title: Cowboy Coaching: Critical reflections on success and failure in workplace coaching

The presentation at this workshop was more informal and invoked much interest and questioning over the research and implications on coaching practitioners and regulation. This workshop was attended by current EdD students, programme leaders and the key note speaker, Professor Michael Young. Feedback was received from a number of participants that my presentation was delivered in a confident manner.

- **British Educational Research Association (BERA), Annual Conference. (6<sup>th</sup> September 2011)**

Title: Business Coaching: Non-Professional Therapy or Focused Professional Development.

The presentation was warmly received at the conference attended predominantly by academics. A question was asked by a doctor in the audience about how the coding of the narrative data was done. The explanation given was acknowledged and accepted. Other questions demonstrated interest around the research in a private organisation, rather than an educational institution.

- **Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), Training Forum (29<sup>th</sup> November 2011)**

Title: Business Coaching: Non-Professional Therapy or Focused Professional Development.

Attendees of the presentation were mainly freelance trainers who delivered materials on behalf of the CIEH. They were very keen to learn about different styles of coaching and about the culture and operations of the organisation where the research was done. Questions were received from an early stage of the presentation demonstrating a keen interest. Gratitude was shown at the end by a round of applause.

- **Training Provider, Continuous Professional Development event (8<sup>th</sup> December 2011)**

Title: Business Coaching: Non-Professional Therapy or Focused Professional Development.

The information was delivered to practising coaches and training practitioners as part of an interactive workshop. Participants discussed key points of the findings, including their perceived differences between coaching and mentoring, and the different styles used with clients. The workshop, which provided a stimulating and thought provoking session supported by the research findings, was enjoyed by participants.

#### **Discussions with Coaching Specialists:**

1. **PhD student, researching concepts of coaching. Oxford Brookes University. (14<sup>th</sup> April 2011)**

Discussed the conceptual framework underpinning the research and provided challenging questions on the methodological processes of the research. This was an uncomfortable discussion as it identified areas that I was not familiar with. This resulted in me returning to this area and increasing my knowledge and familiarity of the methodological terminology.

2. **Masters Leadership Coaching Programme Leader, University of Derby (20<sup>th</sup> May 2011)**

This uncomfortable discussion, again proved challenging as the information presented was not organised and methodical. The focus seemed to jump around and I did not feel adept or sufficiently prepared to be able to offer answers to the challenges. This prompted a more structure approach for the next discussion.

3. **Dr. Jonathan Passmore, School of Psychology, University of East London (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011)**

This discussion was much more comfortable as the information was presented in a structured, logical and organised way. I presented the information in a Power-

point framework although it was delivered through discussion. This interview was more balanced than either of the previous ones and challenges were handled in a more considered way.

## **A Vision of a New Profession**

As the phenomena of coaching continues to grow at an exponential rate, parameters of what coaching is and what it does need to be agreed and disseminated amongst business operators and coaching practitioners so that expectations can be set and met. Although referred to as a profession, coaching has not yet matured enough to fulfil the criteria as such and is still an emerging occupation (Gray, 2011). Demand for regulation continues in many physiological and medical fields, such as cosmetic surgery; and likewise, changes and developments to the psychological and mental fields should also be considered and pursued.

Coaches who practise should expect clients to demand ethical and professional standards of working and proficiency. Although qualifications don't always guarantee practical competence, they should demonstrate the application of relevant knowledge and experience. Cowboy coaches (those who practise without sufficient training, relevant experience or appropriate qualification) can demean the reputation and positive impact that skilled coaches can achieve in developing people and improving performance. Coaches without sufficient training and relevant experience should not expect to find a demand for their services and internal professionals should not be exploited to provide such services.

In future, coaches could choose to be professionally registered through an industry body, which recognises practising coaches for their level of competence rather than the number of qualifications they have gained. This registration status will provide credibility for the coach and additional credibility and confidence for the client. Those coaches who have demonstrated their proficiency through training, qualifications and experience will deliver the results of coaching that many talented practitioners have already enjoyed. The cowboy-coaches that fail to meet the standards of practice expected to achieve the membership should expect to be regarded as the equivalent of medieval 'quacks'; dabbling with powerful tools and approaches with little regard of the potential worth or damage.

There is divided opinion amongst coaches and professionals on the need for regulation (Gray, 2011; Wilson, 2010), how it should be introduced, who should control it and how. A move towards self-regulation or registration might be a promising first step towards full regulation and demonstrate commitment to the path. Before regulation can happen, some agreement needs to be made on what is included in regulation, and the associated costs and benefits. This research lends support to Griffiths and Campbell (2008), who provide the first known evidence-based discussion of coaching standards and suggest a first attempt to regulate the coaching industry and standards of coaching. An alternative suggestion is that coaching is regulated through a professional body already established (Gray, 2011) to ease some of the practical problems associated with regulation but there are many challenges yet to be addressed before coaches agree to be regulated.

There is no suggestion here that having a specific qualification is mandatory for a coach although some understanding of the psychological damage they can ignite would be recommended. The problem of not requiring or expecting regulation of qualifications is that there is no benchmark as to who has undertaken specific training or has obtained a certain standard of competence. The qualifications serve to benchmark a person's understanding and competence - like a surgeon would have to undertake to deal with the physical injuries and promote good health. However, mandatory regulation could drive competent coaches 'underground' if they are not prepared to pay additional subscriptions and associated costs in return for the perceived benefits. Coaching needs to be recognised for the effect it can have on the mind and consequently on people's actions.



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## Appendix 1

### Letter to Participants

Hello,

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate of Education, which requires me to undertake some empirical research in the workplace during the coming year.

The purpose of the research is to observe the application of Coaching in the Workplace. Very little empirical research has been done in the field of coaching and this research looks into the relationships, processes and outcomes involved in Coaching.

As part of the research I would like participants to describe in detail one coaching session that they have been involved in. I will be asking the coach and person being coached to describe the same session. Neither participant will see the description provided by the other party. The participant may include emotions, concerns, structure of the session, comments about how motivated they felt to implement actions, agreements or challenges made in the sessions. Participants may of course use any session notes to refer to when describing the session but the description should be their own opinions and views on the session, rather than conferring with their coach/coachee. Participants may also provide additional information to support their comments and provide evidence of observations or comments made. As with other surveys, I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity; and all materials received will be treated with respect and confidence.

I really appreciate your help and support in this research. Participation is purely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time. Findings from the research will be available to those who wish to see it at the conclusion of the research. If you have any queries or questions please give me a ring on my mobile xxxxx xxxxxx and I will be happy to discuss it with you.

A participant information sheet is attached for further information. Thank you in anticipation of your help and support.

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

# Coaching in the Workplace

Principle researcher:

Sue Smith

Address: xxxxx xxxxxx

Mobile: xxxxx xxxxxx

Email: [sue.smith@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxxxxxxxx)

### *Invitation*

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Participation in the project is entirely voluntary. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

### *What is the purpose of the research?*

The purpose of the research is to observe the application of Coaching in the Workplace. Very little empirical research has been done in the field of coaching and this research looks into the relationships, processes and outcomes involved in Coaching.

The research addresses the following questions,

- Does the coaching style applied within the coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
- Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of coaching?
- Does coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

### *Why I have been chosen?*

You have been chosen because you have been involved in a coaching programme, either as a coach or a coachee, in the last twelve months and I would like to understand your perspectives on the experience.

### *Do I have to take part?*

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Participation is purely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time. You will also have the right to withdraw your data in retrospect, after I have received it. To do this, please submit your request in writing to [sue.smith@xxxxxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxxxxx) and allow 14 days delivery. However, once the data has been analysed and disseminated it will not be possible to satisfy requests to withdraw.

As with other research I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. You will also be asked to sign two copies of a consent form, one of these will be for you to keep and I, the researcher, will keep the other.

Findings from the research will be available to those who wish to see it at the conclusion of the research. If you have any queries or questions please give me a ring on my mobile xxxxx xxxxx and I will be happy to discuss it with you.

*What will be my involvement if I take part?*

You will be asked to provide a descriptive narrative on a coaching session that you have been involved in in the last twelve months. The coach and the person being coached will be asked to provide a description of the **same** session so that the accounts can be correlated. Both the coach and the person being coached will know that each other have participated in the research, because they will be writing narratives of the same session.

The account does not need to follow any specific format and you should endeavour to provide as much information as you can, regarding the experience. You can include facts and emotions, views and opinions; and you can refer back to any notes that you have taken at the time if it helps to provide a detailed account.

If you have any other additional information that will support your account, like action plans, journal notes, feedback information, you can also include this. Supporting information can be provided in hard copy if preferred.

*Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?*

Yes, at no point will your identity be revealed to anyone, except the corresponding coach or person being coached. Your name will not be recorded on any of the research notes that are made and kept as part of the research. All notes, photocopies and any other materials will be kept in secure storage. There will be nothing in any materials that could identify the participants in the research.

Participants will be asked to respect the confidentiality of the corresponding coach/coachee and not to disclose other participant's identity. Agreement to this will be required prior to participation of this stage.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as an academic dissertation. It will be stored in the archives of the University of Derby and will be available for inspection on request. Following the conclusion of the research information will also be available on [www.s2uk.co.uk](http://www.s2uk.co.uk). Progress will also be posted here for interested parties, and updated intermittently.

*Who is organising and funding the research?*

The research is being undertaken as part of a programme of academic research at the University of Derby leading to the award of a Doctorate of Education. xxxxx xxxxxx are also supporting the research.



# CONSENT FORM

## Coaching in the Workplace

Principle researcher:

Sue Smith

Address: xxxxx xxxxxx

Mobile: xxxxx xxxxxx

Email: [sue.smith@xxxxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxxxx)

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet of the above research and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- 2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- 3 I agree to take part in the above research.

Name of participant ..... Date .....  
Signature .....

Name of researcher ...Sue Smith.... Date .....12<sup>th</sup> October 2010.....  
Signature .....S. Smith.....

**NB:** Please note that consent forms received electronically will be acceptable if the form is completed and sent from the participant's account.

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire Questions

#### **Process:**

*(strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)*

1. During your coaching sessions, please state to what extent you agree that it was important...
  - a. To explore possible solutions to achieve your objectives.
  - b. To set objectives to achieve success.
  - c. To discuss how you intended to achieve objectives.
  - d. To discuss the progress you have made on objectives at the following session.
  - e. That you led the session.
  - f. That the coach led the session.
  - g. That the coach was significant to your success.
2. Please add any comments to the questions you have answered above.

#### **Coach Characteristics:**

*(strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)*

3. To what extent do you agree that the following are important to the effectiveness of the sessions...
  - a. That the coach understands the culture and the operations of the company.
  - b. That the coach is independent to the department.
  - c. That the coach is someone who you can trust with confidential matters.
  - d. That the coach has business credibility.
  - e. That the coach is an objective person.
  - f. That the coach is not your line manager.
4. What effect did the coach have, for example, on your working practices?

#### **Your Experience:**

*(strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)*

5. To what extent do you agree that it is important that...
  - a. Your coach was effective in achieving your objectives.
  - b. You had time out to reflect on the objectives.
  - c. You had realisation / eureka moments.
  - d. The session was therapeutic.
  - e. The sessions were challenging and made you think differently.
  - f. It was good to have a neutral and objective person to discuss issues with.
  - g. You would rather have discussed the issues with your line manager.
  - h. You felt the programme was worthwhile and would recommend it to others.
  - i. You would like to continue with the programme, setting new objectives as you go.
  - j. Reflecting is a useful learning technique.
  - k. You were motivated by having to explain your progress to someone at the next session.
  - l. You made progress between the sessions.
  - m. Your confidence has increased as a result of the coaching.
6. How would you rate your overall experience?

- a. Extremely positive
  - b. Positive
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Negative
  - e. Extremely negative
7. Please explain why you have rated your experience so.
  8. Please summarise your coaching experience, including what you enjoyed and what you got from the experience.
  9. Please define or describe what you understand as Coaching.
  10. Please define or describe what you understand as Mentoring.
  11. Please define or describe what you understand as Counselling.
  12. Please indicate which of the following description(s) best describe(s) the style used throughout the coaching session, (tick all that apply)
    - a. Coaching
    - b. Mentoring
    - c. Instruction
    - d. Counselling

**Outcomes:**

13. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') how much do you feel that you have achieved the objectives set?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  - e. 5
  - f. 6
  - g. 7
  - h. 8
  - i. 9
  - j. 10
14. In terms of business outcomes (for example, sales, profit, wastage, turnover of people) have you seen any changes that you could attribute to the coaching programme?
  - a. Yes.
  - b. No.
  - c. I'm sure they contributed but I am unable to demonstrate this.
  - d. Not sure.
15. If you answered Yes to the question above please describe them.
16. Please indicate which level of management best reflects your position when you were involved in the coaching.
  - a. Non Manager

- b. Team Leader / Supervisor
- c. Manager
- d. Head of Department
- e. Regional Manager
- f. Senior Manager

17. Name the Regional Training Manager who conducted your coaching.

- a. Axxxx
- b. Lxxxx
- c. Nxxxx
- d. Sxxxx
- e. Gxxxx

18. When did/will you complete your Coaching Programme?

- a. Apr – Jun 2009
- b. July – Sept 2009
- c. Oct – Dec 2009
- d. Jan - Mar 2010
- e. Apr – Jun 2010
- f. July – Sept 2010
- g. Oct – Dec 2010
- h. Jan – Mar 2011
- i. Apr – Jun 2011
- j. July – Sept 2011

Appendix 3  
**Letter to Participants**

Hello,

I am currently undertaking a Doctorate of Education, which requires me to undertake some empirical research in the workplace.

The purpose of the research is to observe the application of Coaching in the Workplace. Very little empirical research has been done in the field of coaching and this research looks into the relationships, processes and outcomes involved in Coaching.

At this stage of the research I would like participants to complete a survey questionnaire, which will take about 15 minutes. The survey questions are based on outcomes from the initial phase of the research completed in November 2010. The survey focuses primarily on a coachee's experience of coaching. As with other surveys, I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity; and all materials received will be treated with respect and confidence.

I really appreciate your help and support in this research. Participation is purely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time. Findings from the research will be available to those who wish to see it at the conclusion of the research. If you have any queries or questions please give me a ring on my mobile xxxxx xxxxxx and I will be happy to discuss it with you.

A participant information sheet is attached for further information. Thank you in anticipation of your help and support.

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

# Coaching in the Workplace

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Email: [sue.smith@xxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxx)

### Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Participation in the project is entirely voluntary. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

### *What is the purpose of the research?*

The purpose of the research is to understand Coaching in the Workplace. Very little empirical research has been done in the field of coaching and this research looks into the relationships, processes and outcomes involved in Coaching.

The research addresses the following questions,

- Does the coaching style applied within the coaching session make a difference to obtaining positive results?
- Does having a trained and qualified coach make a difference to the outcomes of coaching?
- Does coaching have an impact on achieving business outcomes?

### *Why have I been chosen?*

You have been chosen because you have been involved in a coaching programme in the last eighteen months and I would like to understand your perspectives on the experience.

### *Do I have to take part?*

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Participation is purely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time. You will also have the right to withdraw your data in retrospect, after I have received it. To do this, please submit your request in writing to [sue.smith@xxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxx) and allow 14 days delivery. However, once the data has been analysed and disseminated it will not be possible to satisfy requests to withdraw.

As with other research I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity. You may also be asked to provide consent. In the case of the survey questionnaire, accessing the web link and completing the survey will be construed as consent to participation.

Findings from the research will be available to those who wish to see it at the conclusion of the research. If you have any queries or questions please give me a ring on my mobile xxxxx xxxxxx and I will be happy to discuss it with you.

*What will be my involvement if I take part?*

You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire on Survey Monkey, accessed via a web link. Most of the questions are quick response questions (tick box) based on a rating of how much you agree with statements. Towards the conclusion of the questionnaire there are a couple of questions that ask for a brief description of your perspectives on coaching.

The questionnaire can only be completed once by participants. On completion the web link will expire.

*Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?*

Yes, at no point will your identity be revealed to anyone. Your name will not need to be provided to complete the questionnaire. There will be nothing in any materials that could identify the participants in the research.

*What will happen to the results of the research?*

The research will be written up as an academic dissertation. It will be stored in the archives of the University of Derby and will be available for inspection on request. Following the conclusion of the research information will also be

available on [www.s2uk.co.uk](http://www.s2uk.co.uk). Progress will also be posted here for interested parties, and updated intermittently.

*Who is organising and funding the research?*

The research is being undertaken as part of a programme of academic research at the University of Derby leading to the award of a Doctorate of Education. xxxxx xxxxxx are also supporting the research.



# CONSENT FORM

## Coaching in the Workplace

Principle researcher:

Sue Smith  
Address: xxxxx xxxxxx  
Mobile: xxxxx xxxxxx  
Email: [sue.smith@xxxxx](mailto:sue.smith@xxxxx)

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet of the above research and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above research.

Name of participant ..... Date .....  
Signature .....

Name of researcher ...Sue Smith..... Date ...20<sup>th</sup> February 2011...

Signature .....S. Smith.....

**NB:** Please note that accessing the web link and completing the survey will be construed as consent to participation.

## Appendix 4

### Risk Assessment

Risk to Participant	Severity	Likelihood	Risk Factor	Control mechanism
Physical harm from another person involved in study	1	1	1	Participants will be asked to complete a narrative description of a sessions and will not come into contact with other participants.
Physical discomfort, fatigue, boredom	1	1	1	Participants will be asked to complete the narrative on their own, not in the company of other participants. They can therefore manage their own time and concentration levels.
Psychological or emotional discomfort resulting from self-disclosure or introspection	1	1	1	Participant will be reassured that their disclosure of information is purely voluntary, anonymous and will not have negative repercussions.
Fear of repercussions or embarrassment from narrative produced	2	1	2	The only people who will know that the participant has been involved is the researcher and the corresponding coach/client. Confidentiality forms are requested prior to the research being undertaken.
Adverse effect on personal relationships, loss of status or reputation	2	1	2	Comments remain anonymous and cannot be attributed to a specific participant.
Loss of time	2	2	4	Participants are requested to complete the narrative at an appropriate time. Whilst it is recognised that this can be a time consuming activity, the participant is not required to do it at any specific time as long as it is received before the deadline.
Loss of dignity, safety, and rights	1	1	1	All work carried out will be with greatest respect of the participants and in accordance with the appropriate legislation and Xxxxx policy.
Loss of privacy or association of information	2	1	2	Researcher will ensure that information is stored in accordance with data protection regulations and used anonymously to participant. Data stored on laptop will be password protected in case of theft.
Monetary costs (Transport, time lost from work)	1	1	1	Narratives will be conducted at employee's place of work in non-peak times, or during non-work times.
<b>Risk to Sponsor</b>				
Loss of reputation and credibility	1	1	1	The researcher will ensure that no loss of reputation or credibility will be felt by the sponsor by gaining agreement prior to information being used and participants included. Agreement will be sought at key milestones and in relevant subjects. Buy-in will be secured from senior management at key stages.
Loss of productivity	2	2	4	Agreement from employer will be sought prior to participation
<b>Risk to Researcher</b>				
Physical harm from a participant	1	1	1	Research is conducted on company premises and normal precautions will be taken. Equal Opportunities is taken very seriously by Xxxxxx and wilful failure to apply the policies or evidence of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

(Polit and Beck, 2006: 92)

**Severity 1= low, 5 = high**

**Likelihood 1= unlikely, 5 = very likely**

## Appendix 5

### A summary report of the narratives, activities identified and percentage of script for each activity within the narrative

**Coaching main 21/11/2010 16:11:06**

Narrative	Activity	%	No. of References form source
Narrative 1	360 assessment	9.82	1
	What is coaching	37.81	4
	What is mentoring	8.55	2
	Setting objectives	11.27	2
	Exploring objectives	39.84	3
	Achieving objectives	2.75	1
	Reflective journal	5.72	1
	Realisation moments	5.12	1
	Positives describes	7.14	2
	Outcomes achieving progress	2.75	1
Narrative 2	360 assessment	39.62	2
	What is mentoring	18.23	5
	Setting objectives	50.01	7
	Exploring objectives	47.73	7
	Achieving objectives	10.72	2
	Positives describes	16.77	3
	Supportive by coach	9.77	1
	Discussion led coach	10.22	1
	Discussion led client	9.77	1
Narrative 3	360 assessment	9.22	2
	Change in behaviour	4.34	1
	What is coaching	4.4	1
	Setting objectives	22.4	4
	Exploring objectives	16.91	2
	Achieving objectives	7.36	2
	Positives describes	3.62	1
	Supportive by coach	5.2	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	19.95	5
	Outcomes tangible	5.44	2
	Outcomes business	15.04	4
Narrative 4	360 assessment	27.7	5
	What is coaching	10.32	2
	Setting objectives	12.72	2
	Exploring objectives	62.74	10
	Positives describes	12.63	2
	Supportive by coach	9.82	2
	Discussion led client	21.12	2
	Discussion led coach	11.91	2
Narrative 5	360 assessment	15.61	1
	Change in behaviour	10.4	1
	What is mentoring	39.63	3
	Setting objectives	22.89	2

	Exploring objectives	27.53	2
	Achieving objectives	5	1
	Realisation moments	17.67	1
	Positives describes	15.61	1
	Negatives describes	6.5	1
	Discussion led client	5	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	10.4	1
Narrative 6	Change in behaviour	79.48	4
	Setting objectives	14.47	2
	Achieving objectives	42.86	3
	Reflective journal	37.07	2
	Realisation moments	15.84	1
	Positives describes	68.86	3
	Outcomes achieving progress	68.86	3
	Any other interesting points	18.63	1
Narrative 7	360 assessment	8.69	1
	What is coaching	17.44	1
	What is mentoring	22.66	1
	Setting objectives	39.71	3
	Reflective journal	22.66	1
	Realisation moments	10.95	1
Narrative 8	Change in behaviour	70.93	1
	What is mentoring	7.81	1
	Setting objectives	13.77	2
	Exploring objectives	26.81	2
	Achieving objectives	45.23	1
	Realisation moments	21.52	1
	Positives describes	70.42	2
	Outcomes achieving progress	41.52	1
	Any other interesting points	6.7	1
Narrative 9	Change in behaviour	9.73	2
	360 assessment	21.06	3
	What is mentoring	3.59	1
	Setting objectives	8.23	3
	Exploring objectives	12.68	2
	Reflective journal	7.12	1
	Realisation moments	7.12	1
	Positives describes	3.73	1
	Supportive by coach	3.59	1
	Discussion led coach	3.59	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	25.23	5
	Outcomes tangible	8.82	1
	Outcomes business	37.41	6
	Any other interesting points	18.78	4
Narrative 10	Change in behaviour	77.37	11
	360 assessment	6.82	1
	What is coaching	5.27	1

	Setting objectives	1.8	1
	Exploring objectives	11.44	2
	Achieving objectives	64.52	8
	Reflective journal	8.69	2
	Realisation moments	37.24	4
	Positives describes	53.87	8
	Negatives describes	3.81	1
	Discussion led client	1.8	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	72.48	9
	Outcomes tangible	8	1
	Outcomes business	41.39	5
	Any other interesting points	3.43	1
Narrative 11	Change in behaviour	40.13	9
	360 assessment	12.63	2
	What is mentoring	8.81	2
	Setting objectives	7.93	2
	Exploring objectives	35.55	7
	Achieving objectives	11.17	2
	Reflective journal	4.1	2
	Realisation moments	7.59	2
	Positives describes	19.3	3
	Negatives describes	8.35	1
	Supportive by coach	5.58	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	26.2	5
	Outcomes tangible	5.58	1
	Outcomes business	14.02	3
	Any other interesting points	19.21	4
Narrative 12	360 assessment	27.72	4
	Change in behaviour	13.34	3
	What is coaching	13.3	3
	Setting objectives	18.52	4
	Exploring objectives	23.93	4
	Achieving objectives	7.93	1
	Realisation moments	9.56	4
	Positives describes	19.34	3
	Negatives describes	8.79	1
	Supportive by coach	3.48	1
	Outcomes achieving progress	7.93	1
	Outcomes tangible	3.78	1
	Outcomes business	7.93	1
	Any other interesting points	5.41	2

**1. PROCESS During your coaching sessions, please state to what extent you agree that it was important ...**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
to explore possible solutions to achieve your objectives	<b>67.5% (54)</b>	31.3% (25)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	80
to set objectives to achieve success	<b>51.9% (41)</b>	46.8% (37)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	79
to discuss how you intended to achieve the objectives	<b>53.2% (42)</b>	45.6% (36)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	79
to discuss the progress you have made on objectives at the following session	<b>62.0% (49)</b>	35.4% (28)	1.3% (1)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	79
that you led the session	3.8% (3)	34.2% (27)	<b>54.4% (43)</b>	7.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	79
that the coach led the session	3.9% (3)	29.9% (23)	<b>50.6% (39)</b>	14.3% (11)	1.3% (1)	77
that your coach was significant to your success	35.4% (28)	<b>46.8% (37)</b>	12.7% (10)	5.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	79
answered question						<b>80</b>
skipped question						<b>0</b>

**2. Please add any comments to the questions you have answered above**

	Response Count
	10
answered question	<b>10</b>
skipped question	<b>70</b>

### 3. COACH CHARACTERISTICS To what extent do you agree that the following are important to the effectiveness of the session ...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
that the coach understands the culture and the operations of the company	<b>61.5% (48)</b>	33.3% (26)	3.8% (3)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	78
that the coach is independent to the department	<b>45.6% (36)</b>	35.4% (28)	15.2% (12)	3.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	79
that the coach is someone who you can trust with confidential matters	<b>78.5% (62)</b>	19.0% (15)	2.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	79
that the coach has business credibility	<b>48.8% (39)</b>	38.8% (31)	11.3% (9)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	80
that the coach is an objective person	<b>64.6% (51)</b>	34.2% (27)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	79
that the coach is not your line manager	<b>61.3% (49)</b>	25.0% (20)	11.3% (9)	1.3% (1)	1.3% (1)	80
answered question						80
skipped question						0

### 4. What effect did the coaching have, for example, on your working practices?

	Response Count
	16
answered question	16
skipped question	64

## 5. YOUR EXPERIENCE To what extent do you agree that it is important that


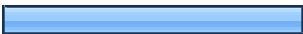

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
your coach was effective in achieving your objectives	30.3% (23)	<b>60.5% (46)</b>	7.9% (6)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	76
you had time out to reflect on the objectives	35.1% (27)	<b>59.7% (46)</b>	2.6% (2)	1.3% (1)	1.3% (1)	77
you had realisation/eureka moments	28.9% (22)	<b>39.5% (30)</b>	26.3% (20)	5.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	76
the sessions were therapeutic	35.5% (27)	<b>39.5% (30)</b>	18.4% (14)	3.9% (3)	2.6% (2)	76
the sessions were challenging and made you think differently	42.9% (33)	<b>48.1% (37)</b>	7.8% (6)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	77
it was good to have a neutral and objective person to discuss issues with	<b>61.8% (47)</b>	34.2% (26)	3.9% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	76
you would rather have discussed the issues with your line manager	0.0% (0)	2.6% (2)	31.6% (24)	<b>48.7% (37)</b>	17.1% (13)	76
you felt that the programme was worthwhile and would recommend it to others	<b>51.3% (39)</b>	39.5% (30)	7.9% (6)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	76
you would like to continue with the programme, setting new objectives as you go	28.9% (22)	<b>42.1% (32)</b>	15.8% (12)	13.2% (10)	0.0% (0)	76
reflecting on issues is a useful learning technique	42.1% (32)	<b>53.9% (41)</b>	3.9% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	76
you were motivated by having to explain your progress to someone at the next session	34.2% (26)	<b>43.4% (33)</b>	15.8% (12)	6.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	76
you made progress between the sessions	26.0% (20)	<b>62.3% (48)</b>	10.4% (8)	1.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	77
your confidence has increased as a result of the coaching	32.5% (25)	<b>39.0% (30)</b>	19.5% (15)	9.1% (7)	0.0% (0)	77
answered question						77



skipped question

3

## 6. How would you rate your experience overall?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Extremely Positive		50.0%	38
Positive		44.7%	34
Neutral		5.3%	4
Negative		0.0%	0
Extremely Negative		0.0%	0
answered question			76
skipped question			4

## 7. Please explain why you have rated your experience so.

	Response Count
	62
answered question	62
skipped question	18

## 8. Please summarise your coaching experience, including what you enjoyed and what you got from the experience.

	Response Count
	54
answered question	54
skipped question	26

### 9. Please define or describe what you understand by Coaching

		Response Count
		70
answered question		70
skipped question		10


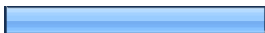


### 10. Please define or describe what you understand by Mentoring.

		Response Count
		70
answered question		70
skipped question		10





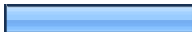
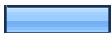

### 11. Please define or describe what you understand by Counselling

		Response Count
		70
answered question		70
skipped question		10

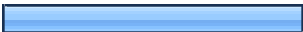

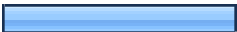

12. Please indicate which of the following description(s) best describe(s) the style used throughout the coaching session, (tick all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Coaching		90.0%	63
Mentoring		38.6%	27
Instruction		14.3%	10
Counselling		35.7%	25
answered question			70
skipped question			10

13. OUTCOMES On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being 'very little' through to 10 being 'totally') how much do you feel that you have achieved the objectives set?

		Response Percent	Response Count
1		0.0%	0
2		0.0%	0
3		0.0%	0
4		1.5%	1
5		4.6%	3
6		3.1%	2
7		35.4%	23
8		27.7%	18
9		15.4%	10
10		12.3%	8
answered question			65
skipped question			15







**14. In terms of business outcomes (for example, sales, profit, wastage, turnover of people) have you seen any changes that you could attribute to the coaching programme?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		44.9%	31
No		10.1%	7
I'm sure they contributed but I am unable to demonstrate this		34.8%	24
Not sure		10.1%	7
answered question			69
skipped question			11






**15. If you answered Yes to the question above please describe them**

	Response Count
	33
answered question	33
skipped question	47









**16. Please indicate which level of management best reflects your position when you were involved in the coaching**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Non Manager		7.2%	5
Team Leader/Supervisor		11.6%	8
<b>Manager</b>		<b>60.9%</b>	<b>42</b>
Head of Department		14.5%	10
Regional Manager		4.3%	3
Senior Manager		1.4%	1
answered question			69
skipped question			11

**17. Name the Regional Training Manager who conducted your coaching**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Coach A		5.8%	4
Coach L		18.8%	13
Coach N		10.1%	7
Coach G		13.0%	9
<b>Coach S</b>		<b>52.2%</b>	<b>36</b>
answered question			69
skipped question			11

### 18. When did/will you complete your Coaching Programme?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Apr-Jun 2009		0.0%	0
July – Sept 2009		1.4%	1
Oct – Dec 2009		1.4%	1
Jan – Mar 2010		10.1%	7
Apr – Jun 2010		18.8%	13
<b>Oct – Dec 2010</b>		<b>29.0%</b>	<b>20</b>
Jan – Mar 2011		27.5%	19
Apr – Jun 2011		10.1%	7
Jul – Sept 2011		1.4%	1
<b>answered question</b>			<b>69</b>
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>11</b>